MYSTICISM IN ISLAM

www.aaiil.org

Printed at
MEM Printers, Calcutta Road No. 4
Freefort, Trinidad (West Indies)

Published by
Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad Charitable Trust
15 Brandreth Road, Lahore (Pakistan)

DEDICATED

to

our very dear brother

Mr. Dawood Ahmad Ginwala

of Rangoon (Union of Burma)

who suggested the idea of compiling the book

and contributed towards its publication

CONTENTS

Foreword 7

Introduction 11

Sūfī movement —12, Degeneration of the Movement —17, Highest clumination of spiritual life —19, *Tasawwuf* a regular science —20, Three stages of human consciousness —21, How sūfīs define their experience —22, Order of saints in Islam —24, Sufism not a borrowed plume — 27.

Mysticism 31

Human body the temple of God —32, Service to humanity —32, Biblical records —33, Spiritualism —34, Divine economy — 35, Thought transference —42, Muslim point of view —44.

Cosmic Consciousness 47

Self-expression and self preservation —54.

The soul and its function 74

Constructive ability —77, Some fleshes as forbidden food —81.

Angels: Guides in spiritualism 84

Concentration of mind —88, Inspiration and revelation —96, Mystic healing in Islam —100.

Messages from the Supreme Spirit 108

Spiritualists —114, Latent human faculties —119, Life after death —128.

References 133

INTRODUCTION

Contributors:
Maulana Muhammad Yakub Khan
Maulana Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad

INTRODUCTION

Whatever connotation is attached to the term mysticism, it is more or less, if not exactly, what is known as *tasawwuf* in the literature of Islam. A brief reference to the origin of this word in Islamic nomenclature may not be without interest. Some trace the origin of *tasawwuf* and its derivative *sūfi* (one possessed of mystic powers) to the *Ashāb-i Suffa*, the Holy Prophet's Companions who used to sit and sleep on the *suffa* or raised terrace, in the mosque, devoting their time and energy to the acquisition of religious knowledge. In later times pious people came to be called "sūfī", after these Companions. Others suppose the term *sūfī* to be derived from *sūf* or wool. Like the Christian sackcloth, woolen garments suggest the idea of penance: but such garments did not form any part of the necessary insignia of the Sufi Order. And there is yet another surmise. *Safā* means purification, and so *sufi* signifies the person with a pure heart. But according to a modern scholar, the word *sūfi* is in all likelihood an adaptation of the Greek word *sūf* which signifies "deep wisdom".

Whatever may be the derivation of the word *tasawwuf*, there is no mistake about what it stands for. Knowledge of the reality of things, according to the *sūfī*, is beyond the reach of the bare intellectual vision of man.

Questions such as the why and wherefore, the whence and whither of this fact of existence, have ever baffled all attempts at solution. No scientific research, no philosophic discourse, no metaphysical speculation, can offer a convincing answer to this riddle of life. Their vision is limited to the four walls of physical sense. On these wings we may soar to great heights, but when we do land wherever it may be, we are still on the misty soil of doubt and obscurity. The highest flight of speculative thought may at best take us to the stage that there ought to be a universal mind pervading the entire realm of phenomena, but even this, after all, is only probable and not positive knowledge. The gulf between ought to be and *is*, is still there, yawning as wide as ever. It is the *sūfī* that comes forward to bridge this gulf, to raise that ought to be to the plane of *is*. This, he tells us, is done in moments of "illumination", "intuition", "inspiration" or "revelation", call it what you will. There is no longer that tossing on the waves of doubt, uncertainty and obscurity. It is broad daylight, and things appear as they are.

This, in a nutshell, is the true purport of *tasawwuf* or mysticism. As a truth, it is based on the teachings of Islam and is every bit Islamic. It constitutes, in fact, the highest meaning of the religion of Islam — the uplifting of man to those celestial heights where one is in full view of the Reality.

Sūfī Movement

Before proceeding, however, with the elucidation of this great Islamic truth, a survey of the growth, development and subsequent decay of the sūfī movement as a specific system or cult may not be out of place.

To begin with, this sufi system seems to owe its origin more to a counter-current set in reaction to the rigid formalism and hollow ceremonialism of the Commandment. The champions of the Commandment laid all their emphasis on observance, regardless of the corresponding spiritual purification which ought to be the sole purpose of all commandments. The *sūfī*, with a keen eye for the reality behind the appearance, for the kernel within the shell was naturally disgusted with the mimic letter worship of the *mulla* or the clergy. To him, the latter's ritualistic practices seemed sheer nonsenses, and he was not slow to denounce them as such. This has ever kept the *sūfī* and the *mulla* at loggerheads. The *mulla*, often in the good books of the powers that be, has, on his part, invoked all the rigour of law and custom against the unfortunate sūfī and often made him the victim of ostracism, imprisonment and, at times, even of the gallows. Theirs is a story much akin to that of Jesus and the Pharisees.

Imam Ghazāli may be regarded as the chief exponent of sufistic thought. He was the first to formulate the notions of this school. His exposition of the system in a few words is just this: like the school of commandment, the school of *tasawwuf* comprises two parts, *viz.* knowledge and conduct. The difference between the two is that, in the first, knowledge precedes conduct whereas in the latter knowledge is the outcome of conduct. In other words — as a matter of course — knowledge of things is first acquired through education, ratiocination and similar processes of the brain; and then comes one's conduct, which is regulated according to the knowledge thus obtained. But in the case of *tasawwuf* knowledge comes, Imam Ghazāli tells us, as a flash of light, without any physiological brain processes. Such knowledge is the outcome of a pure heart which, in its turn, is the product of certain pious devotional practices. On hearts so cleaned

of all worldly alloy, Divine Light falls like a flash of lightning, which in the twinkling of the eye opens up before man's mental eyes a vast vista of knowledge. Imam Ghazāli elucidates the point in the following parable:

"Once upon a time a competition was held between Roman and Chinese painters. Each claimed superiority in the art. The King called them to a trial of their skill, setting them to show their handiwork on opposite walls. And lest they should copy each other, a screen was suspended in the middle, between the walls, to shut them off from each other's view. In a few days the Romans informed the King that their work was finished, and so did the Chinese. The curtain being lifted, it was found that the two did not vary at all. The one was an exact copy of the other. Then it was discovered that the Romans, instead of doing any painting themselves, had only polished the surface of their wall, so that when the curtain was removed it reflected the painting on the opposite wall."

The voluminous works of Imam Ghazāli are considered the standard works on Islamic mysticism. They give a wonderfully minute dissection of the human mind, its shades and colours, passions, emotions, volitions and contain a remedy for every conceivable moral or spiritual ailment.

Another great figure of the same school, Maulana Jalāl-ud-Dīn Rūmī, quotes the same illustration and says that the heart of man, when thus purified, becomes the tabernacle of the Divine. His famous *Masnawī* is known by the name of the "Qur'ān in the Persian language."

The pages of Islamic history have been bright with these spiritual luminaries, all down the ages. The names

of Attar, Hāfiz, Sa'dī, amongst the Persians, are too well known to need any introduction. Every Muslim land is rich in these beacon lights. Muīn-ud-Dīn, Nizām-ud-Dīn, Ganj Bakhsh, Bahā-ud-Dīn and many others, shone on the spiritual horizon of India and their graves to this day adorn that ancient home of sages and seers, attracting crowds of pilgrims, both Muslims and Hindus. Their works are sweet to a degree. Of the Divine Beatitude, which is the goal of all their efforts, and which forms the burden of their tunes, they speak as of a beloved. And so are the various spiritual pleasures of their ecstatic moments likened to wine or the gentle breeze and quite a vocabulary of terminology has been developed to express the hundred and one phases in relation to the Universal Mind. Here is a specimen of their enchanting notes:

"A philosopher you have become, but you know not.
From where you are, where you are and what you are.
Throw your hundreds of books and leaves in the fire;
Turn your heart and soul towards the Beloved.
In your heart will you see knowledge of prophets;
Without the aid of book, or tutor or teacher."

— Maulānā Rūmī.

***

"How long will you waste your toil in Greek philosophy?

Come and learn the philosophy of the believers too.

A lifetime have you wasted in discourses of grammar;

Come and read a word of love as well.

There is no knowledge but the knowledge of love;

All else is deceit of the evil one."

— Bahā-ud-Dīn.

***

"Knowledge of physical is a burden to them;
Knowledge of people of the heart is a lift unto them;
Knowledge of the heart: it is a bosom friend;
Knowledge of the body: it is a snake."

— Maulānā Rūmī.

***

"You have not come out of your low passion closet,
How can you hope to get to the street of Truth?
The beauty of the Beloved has no veil to cover it;
You have only to keep down the dust of your way to behold it."

— Ḥāfiz.

***

These great souls whose one care was Truth and nothing but Truth, were quite right in the denunciation of hollow ceremonialism. The Qur'ān itself is unsparing in its disapproval of any such thing. Prayer five times a day is obligatory on every Muslim, and yet the Qur'ān says:

> "Have you seen him who belies religion? That is the one who is rough to the orphan and does not urge others to feed the poor. So woe to the praying ones, who are unmindful of their prayer!" (107: 1-5).

Prayer as a mere ritual is no prayer. It must lead to spiritual elevation, or else it is worthless trash. "Prayer is the *Mi'rāj* or ascension of a believer," says the Holy Prophet of Islam. *Mi'rāj* means a ladder and so, by prayer, a believer has to ascend to higher planes of spiritual life. Again, the Holy Prophet is reported once to

have asked his Companions: "What do you think of a man in whose house there flows a stream of crystal water and five times a day he takes a dip into it?"... "So is the case of the man," continued the Holy Prophet, "who says his prayers five times a day." This is the value of these religious observances when performed in their proper spirit. On physico-psychological grounds, too, their value is obvious enough. The recent theory of psychophysical parallelism bears testimony to the efficacy of bodily observances, postures, repetition of words by mouth, and so forth. Indeed, they have an unfailing corresponding effect on our mentality. So, as a means to an end, these devotional practices are indispensable, just as food is indispensable if the body is to be kept in proper order and strength. Therefore these great spiritual luminaries, though they placed all their emphasis on the soul of things, never gave up the observance of the law. It was the law as observed by the letter worshipper that was a cause of spiritual decay; but for proper growth and development the law was none the less necessary. All that was needed was to keep an eye on the spirit of the law and aim at that. Nevertheless, their denunciation afforded a handle to many to evade the rigour of the law. Many an indolent person and idler, to whom a well-regulated, well-balanced life of law and commandment was rather irksome, would flock to the *sūfī* order.

Degeneration of the Movement

It was thus that the movement degenerated. In the common herd, to whom it meant no more than a refuge from the rigorous life of the law, its original spark was extinguished. It had arisen as a protest against formalism, but gradually it became itself a dead-weight of perhaps worse formalism. The letter again took the place of the spirit, rite and ritual of essence. A stupendous structure of terms and trappings was raised in the course of time, such

as *wird* and *wazīfa* (repetition of certain holy words), *pir* and *murid* (the spiritual guide and the disciple), *silsilah* (line of spiritual descent) and *sajjādah nashīn* (those who sit in the seat of the teacher), *bai'at* (oath of allegiance to the head), of *sajjādah* and *tasbih* (prayer-carpet and strung beads), *sarod* and *wajd* (hymn-singing and ecstasy), *zikr-bil-jahr* and *zikr khafi* (loud repetitions and low repetitions), *darwaish* and *fakir* (the ascetic hermit), *hāl* (working up an ecstatic mood), *mast* and *malang* (oblivious of everything and reckless), *ghauth*, *qutub*, *abdāl*, *wali* (the various spiritual ranks), *sālik* (the seeker after Truth), *sirr* (the secret) and a hundred and one others. And under this superstucture was crushed the vision of Ghazāli, Rūmī, Hāfiz and the rest of the great sūfīs. Theirs was a cry of "back to Islamic simplicity." But those who came after them, men of narrower views and commoner clay, outdid the *mulla* himself in weaving a web of rites and rituals, forms and names, around the simple Truth of Islam. The general decadence of the world of Islam has in no small degree been influenced by the mushroom of the sufi schools, now deformed and degenerated, that sprang up here, there and everywhere. A wave of lethargy swept over all those who fell under their influence. What was this life worth? A *sūfi* looks forward to things of the hereafter. While here, he must be content with whatever befalls him. His sole care must be to do the will of the *pīr*, whose mysterious influence with God would secure him a position of special privilege with Him. Thus was undermined the moral backbone of once a manly, strenuous race. The Islamic life of strife and struggle gave place to a life of morbid humility and contentment. The Islamic straightforward commonsense code of life was subordinated to the caprice of an ignorant *pīr*.

Highest culmination of spiritual Life

Nevertheless, the fact remains that *tasawwuf*, as truly conceived and worked out by the great masters, has its roots in the teachings of the Holy Qur'ān and is, in fact, the highest culmination of the Islamic conception of a spiritual life. The Word of God is still the highest reward with which a truly good and noble soul can be blessed. Says the Qur'ān:

> "How surely the friends of Allah... Those who believe and keep their duty. For them is good news in this world's life and in the Hereafter..... That is the mighty achievement" (10:62-64).

Again:

> "Those who say, Our Lord is Allah, then continue in the right way, the angels descend upon them, saying: Fear not, nor be grieved, and receive good news of the Garden which you were promised" (41:30).

Divine revelation still comes, and will ever come, to enlighten a clean and pure heart. And inasmuch as true *tasawwuf* stands for that grand truth, it is one with Islam. It may, however, be pointed out that for self-purification necessary to make one a recipient of the Divine Word, Islam recognizes no such forms and practices as laid down by mysticism *(tasawwuf)*. Islam has only one pathway that leads Godwards — the pathway of a good practical life, of duty, honesty, goodwill and charity — the image of God as He is. Let man but work out these potential virtues in him — and work out he cannot but through daily practical life — and Divine Light will reflect on his heart, even as the light of the sun does on a clean mirror. "The life of this world is like a field for the life to come," the Holy Prophet says; and so it is on this soil of practical life

that we must work out our spiritual elevation. Anything tending to detach from this life in which the All-Wise Providence has placed us, is deceit, illusion, moonshine. No farm, no corn; no practical life, no spirituality. A true *sūfī* is thus one whose life is the richest, fullest, throbbing with vitality, and at the same time pure, noble and honourable — and he is the true Muslim.[1]

Tasawwuf a regular science

The word "mysticism", which is generally used to indicate this aspect of Islam, is a little misleading. The English word has an elusive atmosphere about it, whereas *tasawwuf* itself is a regular science with its set laws and a full scheme in detail. It is based on palpable experiences which can be reproduced, as in any other sciences, under set circumstances. Every pilgrim has to pass through the same stages in his spiritual journey and these various stages are readily recognizable by their detailed descriptions given unanimously by all masters. The landmarks and pitfalls are described in equally exhaustive particulars. Just as in any other course of study there are methods in *tasawwuf* to test the progress of the disciple and his merit. As in any other branch of knowledge, there are geniuses in this branch of study also, who create a stir in the world, but even the humblest learner can at least aspire to develop a living sense of the presence of God in the very midst of our struggle of material existence. He also develops a taste for this culture and an interest in those who follow this path and thereby acquires an increasing control over his passions and desires for things wordly. It can be understood that this paves the way for real social peace, the crying need of the times.

As for the more gifted pilgrims — but for them God would be a mere hypothesis — it is their experiences that have made God a palpable fact of experience and have

made thinking humanity believe in the continuity of life after death. It is they who radiate a faith in life everlasting which, in its turn, takes away the sting from death and enables us, the average men, to view life with a sense of ease. They attain to a perfect certainty about the existence of God by a speaking contact with Him and thereby act as the viceregents of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It is to these people that the latter refers in his much-quoted saying: "The learned among my followers are like the prophets of Israel," or in another saying: "The learned are the successors of the prophets."

The law being complete in the shape of the Holy Qur an, no prophet is needed after the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). And yet these spiritual luminaries must be there to testify to the existence of God, to the truth of the Qur'anic revelation and to the continuity of the Holy Prophet's spiritual regime. Without these personalities belief in all these verities would be reduced to a mere make-belief, devoid of any power to influence people's thought and action. This has exactly been the fate of all religions excepting Islam which, is still rich in the tradition of these living experiences.

The three stages of human consciousness

Islam is not a speculative philosophy or a dogmatic theology, but an experimental science with its attractions as such. Let us briefly describe here the general framework of this science:

Human consciousness is divided into three conditions rising upwards in the scale of evolution:

— *Nafs Ammāra*, i.e., unruly animal self;
— *Nafs Lawwāma*, struggling moral self;

— *Nafs Mutmainna*, composed God-realising self.

In the first stage, *ammāra*, man is purely animal, restless with animal urges, impatient of restrictions and stranger to any pricking of conscience. By a systematic course of religious training, of which obedience to commands and prohibitions is the chief feature, he develops a sense of propriety and impropriety and repents after every fall and error. This is the *lawwama* state. This stage begins with the first dawning of the moral sense and ends in the complete surrender of the animal ego in man, which marks the third and highest stage, *viz.*, *mutmainna*. The struggle between the lower and higher self having now ended, the pilgrim enters a condition of perfect peace, of purity, of rectitude and of knowledge.

How sufis define their experience

To indicate the experiences starting from the threshold of this stage and continuing further on, the sufis have coined three more terms, viz.:

Fanā: a complete subjugation of the animal self. At this stage man ceases to be disturbed by any urge of desire. The only urge left in him is prayerful surrender of his whole being.

Baqā: a restoration of the self in a new consciousness, this time not of the flesh but of the spirit. The urges of the self are no longer from the animal passions which drive a person to acts involving violation of other people's rights and which lead to disturbance in society, but from the God-controlled spiritual region which is the source of actions invariably beneficial to humanity and creation.

Liqā: the stage wherein man's spiritual knowledge rises to such a high pitch that the rewards for this faith,

sincerity and devotion no longer remain a matter of belief but become a palpable certainty and experience as if he has them already, and his faith in God reaches a point wherein it seems to him that he is seeing God. Such a man becomes free from all fears about the future and from all sorrows about the present and the past. In such a condition a man is free from all hesitations and obscurity of judgment and doubts and misgivings. In this condition the devotee is coloured by the attributes of God in the manner of a piece of iron which assumes the colour of fire if it is kept long enough in it. And in moments of commotion such a man's feelings partake of divine powers, so much so that his pleasure brings in the pleasure and blessings of God and his anger brings the wrath and curse of God, and events seemingly contrary to the laws of nature come into being through his attention. Receiving powers from God he possesses a power of creation; he creates events and even determines the course of history.

It should be borne in mind that after a pilgrim has entered the state of *fanā* which in the language of the Qur'ān, is called *istiqāma*, the next two stages of *baqā* and *liqā* follow as a matter of course. The reason is that when a person becomes completely devoid of attachment to creation and desires and personal will, he automatically enters the state of *baqā*. So long as a man is not confirmed in the state of self-annihilation and his surrender to God does not become a spontaneous matter, he cannot be said to be in a state of *baqā*, which requires that all acts of devotion and surrender should become natural acts not needing any effort. When such a state is attained the man feels that all that belongs to him is really God's. And while other people of the world delight in the satisfaction of their own personal desires, such a person enjoys the worship of God and His remembrance.

Thus when the pilgrim is confirmed in this state of *baqā* and it becomes the warp and woof of his very being, a light appears to descend from heaven and the mist of uncertainty is altogether lifted from his heart, which is now filled with a sweet feeling of love, never experienced before, like the sensation one experiences at the time of reunion with a loving friend after a long separation. This is accompanied by a highly pleasing shower of Divine communications every now and then, which may be said to be attended by a heavenly sweet smell and a coolness like that of a spring breeze. At this stage the devotee feels pleasure in sacrificing everything he possesses for the sake of God, even his honour and life. His heart becomes so filled with the light divine that it seems as if he is experiencing the rays of the mid-day sun within his bosom and as if God Himself has descended on his heart with all His glory. And these are the signs of the state of *liqā*.

It is also to be remembered that, while attainment of *fanā* is the result of human efforts, the two higher stages of *baqā* and *liqā* are the gifts of God proceeding from His grace. The pilgrim's spiritual struggle takes him to the stage of *fanā* only. After this, divine grace takes him by the hand and carries him to the higher regions. So the rigours of the journey are felt only as far as the state of *fanā*.

Order of saints in Islam

It seems also necessary to explain another set of ideas and corresponding terms in sufism. It is in relation to the order of saints. According to the sufis, there is a hierarchy of saints or *auliyā* at all times in the world, through whom God manifests His mercy to the world of humanity. In the absence of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) they are the vice-regents of God on earth on His behalf. They are of three different

grades — *badāl* (plural *abdal*), *ghauth* and *Qutub*. *Badal*, literally "substitute", is so called because if any one of these saints happens to die, God immediately substitutes another for him. They are righteous persons of whom the world is never destitute (Ibn Durayd, Sihah, Muḥkam, Qāmūs). But the more authoritative view is that they are given this name because of their ever-changing spiritual condition. They are in a flux and are not allowed to remain in one state. Being still on their way to God-realisation, they are not allowed to settle down at any intermediate point.

As to their exact number and location, opinions differ. They seem to be the lowest in rank among spiritual successors of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)

According to the best authorities, *ghauth and qutub* are a hierarchy of the saints of a particular generation, and are supposed to be pre-eminently endowed with sanctity and with miracle-working faculties." If someone is a *qutub* or a *ghauth*, he is recognised as such only by his agents, *badal*, unless, of course, he himself reveals his position to a particular man. The literal meaning of *qutub* is "axis", or pivot, the point upon which a thing turns, the chief upon whom the state of affairs turns. So a *qutub* is he whose attentions and prayers decide the course of events in a particular society of people. He may be regarded as a kind of spiritual agent in a particular community. The literal meaning of *ghauth* is "aid", "succour" in the midst of difficulties. So a *ghauth* is a kind of intercessor, who intercedes at a moment when the sins of a nation or of the whole of humanity are at the point of being punished. These seem to be particularly tender-hearted, like the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Their hearts melt at the woes and sufferings of humanity and they are therefore a

means to avert divine punishment. With the acceptability of their prayers assured, these become a plea for divine forgiveness and mercy. So *badal* or *abdāl* may be regarded as spiritual magistrates. Above them are the *qutub* and in the highest rank are the *ghauth*.

Together they constitute the make-weight of spiritual humanity at a particular moment, acting on behalf and under the stamp of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). But unlike the *mujaddids*, who are not only authorised but even commanded to announce their existence and authority, neither the *qutub* nor even the *ghauth*, much less the *abdāl*, are authorised to proclaim their existence and position. They act in silence, serve humanity by their precepts and example, and pray incessantly for the general forgiveness of human sins.

Some people have contended that the idea that such people exist and that they are a kind of intercessors for humanity is not Islamic. This view is incorrect. A perusal of the verses 20-27 of chapter 36, *Yā Sīn* of the Holy Qur'ān will show that even in a nation doomed to destruction for its iniquities there live persons who can testify to the truth of a prophet or a man of rod appearing among them by their power of readily recognizing the will of God. The narration of this event is begun with the following words:

> "And from the remote part of city there came a man running. He said: 'O my people, follow the messengers...."

Now, who was this man? — I suggest it must have been either a *ghauth* or a *qutub*.

As for the idea that punishment for the sin of a nation is averted by the presence of an eminent man of spirituality, this can be deduced from the story of the prophet Lot as given in the chapter 11, Hūd of the Holy Qur'ān. This narration shows that the punishment even of a doomed nation is postponed in deference to a spiritual personality living in its midst. Even the punishment of the Quraish was deferred till the migration of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) from Mecca. The Holy Qur'ān lays down this principle in so many words. "God would not chastise them while you were among them..." (8:33). So this idea of the sufis can be traced to principles laid down in the Qur'ān apart from its verification by the invariable experience of saints throughout our history

Sufism not a borrowed plume

It has also been suggested by some non-Muslim writers that sufism is a borrowed plume and not of the soul of Islam. This is based on crass ignorance. All the affairs that led to the formation of the Islamic society and civilization were based on the verbal revelations coming to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in moments of spiritual trance, and minor revelations coming to his Companions from time to time are matters of history. Exclusive devotional practices of a whole band of disciples called *Ashāb al-Suffa* is one of the outstanding facts of the Holy Prophet's time. To say in face of this that Islam was a dogmatic and ritualistic faith in its origin and that *tasawwuf* was of later growth, is to deny an historical fact as clear as broad daylight. The fact is that *tasawwuf* is the soul of Islam and that political Islam is only its physical manifestation. Of course, much of what passes for sufism is not *tasawwuf*. Ideas and practices foreign and even antagonistic to Islam have undoubtedly entered the body politic even of this living faith, parti-

cularly during the last few centuries, because of the general decay in the Islamic social and intellectual system. But disease does not prove the non-existence of health altogether, nor decay the non-existence of body. In spite of corrupting influences from outside and their effects on our spiritual system, *tasawwuf* in its pristine purity has throughout existed in Islamic society. It needs eyes, however, to see it. Eyes that can see nothing but howling and dancing dervishes as the only samples of Islamic mysticism must undergo a major spiritual operation to be fit to discover true *tasawwuf* in Islam.[2]

MYSTICISM IN ISLAM

by

Alhajj Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din

MYSTICISM

What a misconception of our holy Order in this land of misrepresentation and misunderstanding. The whole Western world, I am afraid, is labouring under the same. They think we sufis have no religion. They mistake the universal sympathetic attitude of the Order for our non-identification with any faith or creed. They ought to know that sufi order is purely a Muslim order, and Muslim sympathies under the teaching of the Holy Qur'ān know no man-made limits and boundaries. The Qur'ān claims to bring a message to the whole of mankind. We fail to find any tribal or sectarian God in it. The God of the sūfī is the God of the Qur'ān — *Rabb al-'alameen*, Creator of all nations and creeds. If a sūfī has to accept the Holy Prophet as his examplar — and I wonder how he can perfect his course of self-discipline without doing so — the very ideal before the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah by upon him) which was to devote his life to the service of humanity would make the sūfī a lover of mankind. Yes, we have to serve humanity. All our sympathies and antipathies are for God. We hate what the Almighty hates. We love what He loves.

Human body the temple of God

Is not the human body the temple of God, with the human heart the fittest throne for my Lord to sit upon? How can I hate this very temple of my Beloved? Every man is an object of love for me. He is the house of my God. It is true that some of the temples have become damaged and disfigured by the carelessness of their mortal caretakers. But if I cannot afford to demolish any place of worship, no matter how dilapidated, my duty is to repair and not to destroy. Similarly, people of different persuasions and conduct, if going on lines contrary to the prescribed routine of righteousness, disfigure that Divine tabernacle, I cannot harm it. I must go to make amends.

The religion of Islam inspires me to do so. Love for all and hatred of none, eccepting to fulfil God's commandments, is the true Islamic principle, so strictly observed by our Order. Why it should be taken to mean our non-identification with the religion is a mystery to me? There is one explanation: religions have been at strife from time immemorial. Snarling and biting each other has been the nature of a clergy everywhere. Religionists are usually narrow-minded — a thing unknown in our Order. Possibly for this reason we have been taken to belong to no religion under average judgment.

Service to humanity

God does not need my praising Him. He is above all human glorification. "He is all praise and glorification Himself," so the Qur'ān says. What does this worship of God mean? I think our Book throws a flood of light on the subject. Service to humanity is worship to God. How could a man worship his Creator, if he hates God's other creatures, specially man? At least, a sufi cannot afford to

do so. He must love every unit of humanity. Perhaps this sufi attitude towards his fellow beings has led the Occident to think that he has got no religion. His religion is to serve humanity. How could he do otherwise if he receives inspiration from these words of the Holy Prophet himself: "My prayers and my sacrifices, my life and my death, are to serve the cause of the Lord of all nations and races."

What a noble ideal! I have never read of any other prophet keeping such a sublime ideal before him! I cannot understand Jesus' deeds as related in the Bible. He might have chalked out certain limits for his activities but, in my opinion, he could not have refused light to those who came to him for it from out of the pale of Judaism. An old woman so anxious to be enlightened upon divine truths could not have been awarded such a cold rebuff: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs."

Biblical records

Jerusalem was Jesus only care. The Israelites were perhaps the only people in his judgment who could be classed as men, and the rest of the world mere animals. No, it could not be. Jesus, that beloved prophet, that teacher of high morals and ideals, the very name which I have learnt to revere from the teachings of the Qur'ān, could not be the author of such horrid expressions as he has been reported to have made in the so-called records of his life. It is a libel to his good name. He is one of our prophets. He has been highly spoken of in the Qur'ān. A true lover of humanity, as every messenger of God is expected to be — and he was one of the blessed race — could not style others as dogs, swine and serpents. My conception of a prophet cannot tally with the portrait given of Jesus in the Bible. God be glorified! His book came to save the situation. It redeemed the memory of our

beloved Jesus when it said that the Biblical records have been corrupted by human beings and are therefore not genuine. We should not go by what is narrated of Jesus in the Bible. He was after all a sufi of the order of John the Baptist, and an Essene; his love for humanity knew no bounds. He could not have abused others.[3]

Spiritualism

Spiritualism is something mostly needed in the West. A practical demonstration of life after death is the spiritism aspect of the movement. Religion without faith in the life beyond the grave, becomes an institution inefficacious to enforce its demands. Belief in the accountability of man's every action in some future is the only check against evil tendencies. Many of our sins remain undetected in this life. Many a miscreant may avoid detection and consequently public censure. Disbelief in the coming unavoidable accountability, therefore, would leave depravity unbridled. Hence, belief in the post-grave life is the essential of religion.

Materialism could not be favourable to such belief, though it is a reality with us. Life and death, or death and life is, to me, a common phenomenon. I am quite positive about it. Have I not visited people in the hell? I have tasted also blessings of heaven. Such experiences are within acquisition of the human race, but patience, abstemiousness and an exclusive pursuit of the life of a sufi, with love and devotion, bring man to that life. There is an awakening to it in the West as well but as the race is only emerging from dry materialism and is, to some extent, given up to luxury and pleasure, our austerities will not suit them.

Divine economy

To the Occidental with his usual want of imagination, and his reluctance to go beyond the surface, spiritism observations was the only remedy to cure scepticism in things of the world hereafter. No wonder if spirit visitation came as divine economy to bring home here the lack of belief. Anyhow, belief in the hereafter is on its way to restoration here; no matter if some are duped, or deluded, or victimized to cheat or swindle. Most of the Order are good and honest people, striving after the truth and working for what may be called the real salt of life. I admire their ways and really enjoy their conversation. There is a tinge of that strength of belief in their talk without which walks in the avenue of spirituality is an impossibility. One has simply to look at his unassuming honest face when he relates his, what he calls, abnormal experiences. His eyes become watery, in the heat of the moment. A halo of child-simplicity and innocence plays on his face, his lips open and begin to quiver when he becomes heated in narrating his spiritual incidents. Good God! Who could belie his honest face? No! He is always genuine. One may differ from his conclusions, but he gives the true case.

No wonder to me if one receives visits from the denizens of the other world. Death after all is a passage from here to hereafter. Who can deny the continuity of consciousness? If a child shows traits of his parents' consciousness, and sometimes inherits most of it, has not consciousness travelled from one wordly body of the parent to the other worldly body of the son? A clear proof as to the continuity of consciousness: death cannot kill it. A caterpillar has become a butterfly; but could butterfly come back to the caterpillar-world? Some caterpillars assert that they have seen butterflies. How can I deny it, when I have seen the people of the world behind the

screen? I have talked to them. I have discussed with them questions of importance. They have enlightened me on the difficult problems of theology. They came to my guidance when I groped in the darkness, and discretion and reason was trembling in some critical moments of my life. Often I have been a victim to incurable maladies when the medical verdict or treatment did not inspire hope; but the inhabitants of the Garden of God came to my help. They prescribed me drugs not on the official list of pharmacopoeia, and with wonderful results — this all from the other world. How can I refuse to lend a favourable ear to a spiritualist friend if he comes to me with a story of ghosts? I know over zeal in the cause unconsciously takes better of his judgment, and his narratives unintentionally become coloured. He forgets to note many a circumstantial fact which is more responsible for visualization than anything from beyond the grave.

Imagination is a creative agency of unimaginable potency. Have I not myself perceived my own thoughts materialized in my twenty's? I always mistook them for realities; I still remember those days. A well-meaning sceptic in my friendship always came to explain them on philosophic bases, to my great hatred. I loathed his very face; but I am quite positive now that he was not wrong after all and I was in the error. I may say so now in my grey hairs, when the experiences and observations of twenty years more have made me saner in my deductions. No one, therefore, should deprecate these fantastical experiences which are dawning on the Western horizon. We should make allowances for a beginner. Discouragement and strictures will curb the truth which has just been emerging from materialistic clouds. I must hail the silvery line.

But the question of questions is, whether the apparitions we see in our dreams and visions are from the world

of departed souls? Do the denizens of the post-grave regions really pay visits to us? They may bear the same form and may be clothed in the same figure and features which they had when on the earth. They might give us sometimes knowledge of things which could only belong to them. This may stand as a sound argument to substantiate visits of the translated souls — a logical data, no doubt, to prop what can be said in favour of spiritism; but it cannot be conclusive. It has its explanations; besides, how to account for such visions in which we see persons still in this earthly plane? I have seen them. They enlightened me on things decidedly beyond their knowledge. Have I not met them the following morning after the night when I saw them in vision? I inquired of them of the very subject they were talking to me in my dreams. Not only were they quite ignorant of the visionary occurrence, but the very subject as talked about in dream was strange to them; and I may say much beyond their reach of knowledge. This shows that the theory of "sending thought" is not a satisfactory explanation. I think it would be better if I give here some of the incidents.[4]

We often dream of people, alive, or departed from this world; but the figures which appear to us in such dreams and visions are not necessarily the spirits of the people they seem to represent. Here I speak of real dreams; and not of those fantastical experiences that come to us in our sleep, where imagination, passion, subconsciousness, indigestion, or some disorder in the system, are chiefly responsible for all that becomes visualized therein. Similarly dreams sometimes forecast coming diseases — a thing well-known to physicians in the East. Strange figures appearing in dreams, in black and fiery colours, are not necessarily to be taken as the spirits of persons from Abyssinia, or of denizens of the infernal region. Rather do they indicate a preponderance of

melancholic humour in the body in various degrees. There are times also when, in our dreams, we appear to go through the action of swimming; but that, again, is only the coming cold, or humid humour, in the body materialized; while a highly feverish temperature will assume the form of fire. Sometimes anger appears in the same shape; and the whole subject is full of interest and instruction, especially for the people in the West, who are just becoming awakened to psychic research!

In order to show that the figures we see in dreams are not necessarily the spirits of the people of whom we are dreaming. I may record here a few incidents. In 1913, I was in Paris. I am an early riser, and one June night I left my bed between two and three o'clock in the morning for my prayers and meditations. I felt a very peculiar sensation, resembling backache, some six inches below the neck. I did not feel it while sitting or standing, or while doing any work in an ordinary posture; but some particular movement of the body would make my back painful as if something had become deeply rooted somewhere in the system. Needless to say that I consulted many doctors in Paris, and also in London, and remained under their treatment for months. Turkish baths were also advised, but all was of no avail. My only alternative was, then, to pray to God for some guidance; and so I prayed for many weeks. One night in November, of the same year, someone appeared to me in a dream and suggested that I should write at once to India for a particular kind of lentils which grow only in certain hilly tracts of the country, and is unknown to the average Indian and the lentils prepared in certain way would give me relief. He also informed me that a nephew of mine was on the eve of his departure to this country. My letter reached the young man in the same week that he had to leave for England. He brought me the needed grains, and their use, as

directed, gave me relief after six months. I knew for a fact that that someone was neither a physician nor interested in medicinal research. Though, I knew the source of the dream, yet curiosity, accentuated by the new theories of thought-transference by spirit agencies now obtaining in the West, led me to ask that someone when we met some months after. He not only denied possession of any medicinal knowledge, but added that he had not heard of the said lentil ever before in his life. On my questioning him further, he also had to admit, though with reluctance, that nothing in the last few months had occurred to remind him of me.

Another incident will, perhaps, better illustrate the subject under discussion. Some years ago, I became a helpless victim to a form of nerve-trouble. The complaint reached its climax in the end of the following year. Harley Street doctors and Harrogate baths did me little good, and electric treatment only aggravated the case. In the next year, I was advised to leave the country, but my sojourn in my home and the medical treatment there were of very little efficacy. My last resort was to Him Who causes things to grow and places wonderful properties in them. One October night I saw in a dream two doctors attending me. They were, and still are, my bosom friends and next-door neighbours. One had a phial in his hand with some dark-red liquid in it, which the other was about to inject into my system with a syringe. On my query, they described the liquid as a mixture of X and Z. The very next morning brought us together. When, however, I related to them the experience of the previous night, they not only denied any thought-transference from them to me during that night, but also denied knowledge of the properties of the two said drugs, as it was not "official". They were also very emphatic against my using it, as they ascribed my dream to some subconscious imagination. I

had to submit to their judgment though I knew well how to distinguish between a real dream and an ordinary phantasm, and the dream I experienced had all the signs of reality. I waited yet another year. Treatment from various physicians and doctors in my motherland brought no improvement. I became desperate; I obtained the mixture of which I had dreamed and applied it, and its use, for a week, produced wonderful results.

These are not isolated instances. I can record many others of similar nature to substantiate my contention that apparitions of living persons in dreams and visions are not of necessity the spirits of the persons we dream of. No doubt I cannot make the same assertion with the same confidence as to those who have left this world. But if our dreams of persons living have nothing to do with the spirits or the thoughts of those persons, the same may surely apply to the case of those who have passed from this earthly sphere. If we accept the two dreams cited above as data, no one can question the conclusion that they were truth and reality. The theory of "subconsciousness" or "some forgotten knowledge", possibly received days earlier, of the revealed medicine, would not explain the phenomena. If the property of a drug is not known to the doctors, if the drug itself is neither on their official list of medicines nor is the product of my country, I wonder how it could come within my knowledge, even in my early days.

Some twenty years ago, when I was shown a thing in a dream of certain good to me, its name was given in a language unknown to me. A month later I went to the man who showed it to me in the dream, though I knew that he had nothing to do with it and had been a mere instrument used by the forces of the Unseen. He denied all knowledge of the thing. I inquired concerning it from many men who could have enlightened me in the matter,

but all in vain. After full two years, another name of the same thing was given to me in a dream, this time in Sanskrit — a language which is at present not spoken, nor had I studied it. Anyhow, it was a better clue, and I could find the thing out within a fortnight. Its colour and shape was the same as revealed to me and its effect that which I needed.

This experience of mine hushed all such voices in my judgment as ascribed visionary experiences to "sub-consciousness," or "knowledge forgotten". Having dabbled in Western culture and materialistic philosophy, I had my own doubts about what I am writing here. Pros-and-cons theories never reach a satisfactory conclusion. Personal experience is the only sure key that will solve the mystery. I believe that most dreams and phantasmal experiences do spring from the imagination, and can rightly be explained on materialistic lines. But there is another category of dreams which cannot be traced to such a source and, as I have explained, the theory of thought-transference is also of no great help. Our belief is — and it is borne out by the experience of generations of Muslim sūfis — that when a man prays to God, and He condescends to speak to him, the dream is one of the several means which the Omniscient uses in revealing His mind to His votaries. Phantoms and apparitions which appear to spiritually developed minds in visions or dreams in response to prayer, or in order to guide them when they are in darkness, are the momentary creations of God. Each form or figure which thus appears has nothing to do personally with the individual it represents; sometimes the figure is created on account of its very name, if it has got any meaning, as is invariably the case in the East. Sometimes a special connection of the figure dreamed of with the dreamer explains the matter. In the first and third of the instances I have recorded a part of the names of the

persons of whom I dreamt is the name of God, which means that the message came from God.[5]

Anyhow, I hail this awakening in the West. It is a good beginning, and the Western peoples will come to the true knowledge after all. Reactions in history have never been unattended with such experiences.

Thought transference

Since my last record I have had two further dream-experiences, which persuade me to dismiss the idea of "thought-transference" in the matter as throwing any real light on the question of dreams. The first is as follows: Mr. W ... appeared to me in a dream, beseeching me for urgent pecuniary help. The said gentleman I know quite well to be above financial troubles. He has, however, the misfortune to possess certain physical defects. On the following afternoon another gentleman, suffering from physical defects precisely similar to those of Mr. W, came to me and to my great surprise asked for help, almost in the same terms as those used by the apparition of the previous night. The only thing in common between the apparition of Mr. W and the gentleman who called on me is this same physical disability.

The other experience is, more conclusive. I once had a serious complaint and a doctor friend wanted to help me. One Sunday he brought me some pills, which I accepted, as in courtesy bound, but without, as I frankly confess, any intention of taking them or any particular desire to put them to the test. A few days passed, and the complaint became more troublesome. I prayed to God incessantly for a full week for the cure. And one day, in a vision like a dream, a stage, such as that we see in a theatre, came before me and I saw an English child, of an age apparently between nine and ten, frolicking about on

it, reciting the while some English verses with the chorus: "Mirror Pills, my name, so and so." The dream left me with all the effects of a true vision in my mind. The phrase "Mirror pills" did not sound to me like particularly good or intelligible English. Besides, it conveyed no meaning whatever. I consulted my Webster, and found the following as one of the meanings of the word mirror: "Any polished, or smooth substance, as water, that forms images by the reflection of rays of light."

Here was another puzzle. But the postman's knock brought me that morning a letter from this same doctor friend, who urged me to give a trial to his pills. I looked for those pills and I was surprised to find them brilliant and glossy enough to reflect rays of light. I used them as directed, and they brought me the cure. Here is a typical example which admits of no explanation from spiritualistic or materialistic quarters. Probably, I may say, surely the doctor of whom I have spoken must have been thinking of me, and if transference of thought had anything to do with it the apparition should have been in the person of the doctor. Neither do the theories of subconsciousness, imagination, or association help at all to explain it. Even after the dream I did not think of, or remember, the pills given to me by the doctor. In any case I could never have given them the name of "Mirror pills" even if I had properly examined them before. The message in the dream had been put in the mouth of a child, and the description was a child's description, so was the designation.

We describe things according to our conception of them, or in the terms of such logic as we possess. If we desire to describe a thing with precision, then our knowledge, such as it is, of the properties and attributes of that thing will suggest to us some outstanding quality by which we may distinguish it. Every one is more apt

than not to describe a thing by that one of its features which strikes him most. If the dream in question was the outcome of my imagination and the association of my ideas, I should have named it either after the doctor or the complaint from which I was suffering. But if a child had to name the pills, the gloss and brilliancy of them would be the first thing to appeal to his mind, more especially as he would be incapable of conceiving of any of their other attributes. That the message conveyed through the child in response to my longing, or prayer, for some efficacious remedy revealed to me the true remedy, and was no hallucination, appears from the results achieved by using the pills. Here the question was neither thought transference nor the play of my imagination or subconsciousness.

Muslim point of view

Muslims do believe in the power of thought and its transference, but not on the lines suggested by certain of the spiritualists. We know of ways by which communications may be made from one mind to another without the use of normal means. But I wonder what a spiritualist friend would say about these dreams of mine. Possibly, he would account for them as messages from spirits in the ghostland who are interested in me. But why not attribute them to the Supreme Spirit, Whom I have addressed in my prayers? With us, Muslims, such dreams indicate the initial stage of spiritual growth when the mind of man begins to receive messages from Allah, the Source of all knowledge.

Mankind is invested with wonderful capacities and senses beyond the materialistic ken. Besides our five senses, we have other interior senses. The inner sense of hearing and seeing when cultivated enables their owner to see and hear things quite outside the range of normal

conditions. They have nothing to do with what are commonly called clairvoyance and clairaudience. They represent something of a very sacred nature — a power within the scope of human acquisition, but demanding strong discipline of character. The cultivation of this power was not unknown to the people in the East, but the course they pursued was long and cumbersome, and full of rigid austerity. Islam came to simplify it and render it not inconsistent with our necessary attendance to the other calls of mundane life. Briefly, we have to control the physical side of our nature and weaken its hold on the mind. There are few people in the world who have never had the experience of a true dream. Every one can remember at least one incident of the kind in his life. Our occult powers begin to develop the more in proportion as our physical nature tends to assert itself less.

While we are asleep all our external senses become dormant, and thus we are brought nearer to that state of the mind wherein its latent faculties become awakened. But if we are under the thraldom of the flesh and the lusts of the flesh, unconscious though we may be of their domination while asleep, subconsciously the mind is still under their control; and, hence, less capable of spiritual progression. It is a common experience that the last hours of the night are the more favourable for the true dreams. The reason is obvious. The mind has been freed for many hours from external cares, agitation, and impulses, and has thereby become more qualified to have its inner eyes opened. If a person is capable of exercising the secret power mentioned above, which I speak, this is the state of the mind to which he must attain, even in his waking moments. His control of the carnal side of his nature enables him to ignore the animal element that is in him even while he is conscious and acting under normal conditions. I wonder if the many mediums in the West are

not the victims of delusion. Their life and their environment do not indicate the development of occult power. We need not doubt their veracity. They may be quite genuine in the statement of their experiences. It must then be a gift (and not an advanced spirituality) which the divine economy has granted to some in order to strengthen their belief in the life after death. It must be confessed, however, that the messages we have received through such mediumship have hardly added to the treasure of our knowledge.[6]

COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

A new religious consciousness has dawned upon the Western mind — a desire to strip the current religion of all that was foisted upon it in the Middle Ages, and to see it in as simple a form as possible; but those who have already emancipated themselves from the shackles of the Church have found a new haven of religion. Their motto means "upliftment and advancement, and not salvation." They are mostly interested in psychic research, and try to bring the latent faculties of the human mind into prominence. They seek to pass from the normal to the abnormal regions. They want to see what the naked eye cannot see. They want to hear what the average ear cannot hear. Clairvoyance or clairaudience, healing-power, thought-reading, telepathy and the like, are in great demand. But these, in their fullest development, are divine powers. In their perfect form they are attributes of the divine mind. But we also have been made after the image of God; God breathed His spirit into us, as the Qur'an says: "So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down making obeisance to him" (15:29).

Our mind is a reflection of God's mind, and if we aspire to assume the divine colour it is simply natural that the object of our sojourn on this earth is to reproduce divine morals and to equip ourselves with divine attributes — at least the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah by upon him) demands from his followers that they do this. He makes it a watchword of life when he says: "Imbue yourself with divine morals."

But the divine spirit in us is concealed in the welter of passions, low and carnal in their inceptive condition. We spring from the animal world and carry along with us the animal nature, but our goal is very high. It is for us to sublimate the animal mind; but that cannot be achieved unless we refine our consciousness of its animal cravings.

Consciousness is a sum total of passions that may be classified under three main headings: appetitive passions, the cognate passions and the active passions. We are clothed with various appetites and cravings which, in fact, are the life-tendencies. These appetites, carnal as they may be, are responsible for all progress, culture and civilization. Their impulse leads us to find means of self-satisfaction, and in doing so our cognate passions begin to work at the instance of appetitive passions and we increase our knowledge. Every form of knowledge has come to us in this way. Then out of knowledge is born action. To take homely illustration: we feel thirsty, we think of things that may quench our thirst and then we move to get them. So the levers of all knowledge and activity are our appetites.

The animal possesses consciousness, and this very consciousness, unless it be uplifted, is the chief impediment in our progress to the divine goal. If we are interested in achieving any of the qualities of the divine mind, we must create the divine consciousness in ourselves, which in other words, is called "cosmic consciousness", that is, the faculty of feeling for every thing in the cosmos or in the universe as we feel for ourselves, and of caring for the needs of every creature of God as we care for our own. Unless we attain that high state, or a stage near to it, all our interest in the cultivation of occult powers is simply lip-talk.

There are seven stages between the animal and the Divine consciousness. They are as follows: animal cons-

ciousness, individual consciousness (sometimes also called self-consciousness), family consciousness, tribal consciousness, race consciousness, species consciousness and cosmic consciousness.

Unfortunately, most of us border on the verge of animal consciousness. "Everything is mine" is the ruling feature of animal consciousness which ignores the rights of others. Take an average animal — a dog, for instance. The minute his hunger is excited he snatches at the very first thing that comes in his way. He is not conscious of others' rights. He will not leave the bone; the moment it comes in his mouth, he will not allow any other dog to have it. How many, even of those who think themselves civilized, are above this canine consciousness? Animal consciousness is most clearly seen in a baby; anything that takes a baby's fancy is claimed by him as his own, no matter if it belongs to another. He will cry for it and will not be quiet until he gets it. He cannot bear the idea of others possessing the same thing. "Mine" is the ruling spirit in him. Look around you in the world and consider how many of us have crossed the frontier of animal consciousness. We may be fully grown in age; we may have attained culture and civilization, but the animal within us is still the master. We usurp others' property, and no sooner do we get hold of these possessions than we loathe the very sight of them.

Every religion came to raise humanity from the animal state. Every teacher laid down principles and enunciated doctrines to enable the human soul to soar above this sordid selfish nature. The old Rishis in India led the lives of anchorites. They left towns, severed themselves from mundane affairs, went to the jungles and secluded places to kill the animal consciousness, and attain higher states of consciousness in order to work out latent faculties. They, however, failed to appreciate the

fact that divine consciousness, the goal of their exertions, consisted of some of such high moralities as could only be cultivated and exercised when in direct and immediate contact with human society. Beneficence and generosity, for example, are the most prominent features of the divine mind; and how can one develop these high morals in a jungle, where there is no one to benefit by them? Moreover, you cannot afford to be beneficent to others, in the true sense of the word, if you have not yourself troubled to earn something. To be liberal on the proceeds of others' labour is not generosity. Try to acquire things through your honest labour, and part with it for the benefit of others. This is true beneficence, and how can it be compassed in the jungle?

Bravery, or courage, is another divine attribute which comes into play when you have to defend an oppressed person or right some wrong. This, again, demands contact with the human society. Honesty, continence, constancy, patience, high moralities — all these cannot be developed in secluded or desert places. The Hindu system of yoga will not suit present-day life, nor will it enable us to reach the goal. Jesus came to elevate humanity. He aimed at the same grand idea of raising man from the animal state towards the Divine, when he preached socialistic principles. He wanted to wean his people from sordidness and self-indulgence, and create in them a feeling for others but his followers, only a generation after him, obsessed with the idea of propagating their religion in the pagan world, evolved a system which nipped Christianity in its very bud and brought it to complete failure. Paganism was engrafted upon it when it was a mere seedling, and every form of self-aggrandizement and selfishness came in its train.

Christianity began to wade knee-deep in human blood and committed more sins in the name of religion

than the world had ever seen before. If beliefs in the grace of blood, or participation in sacraments is sufficient for salvation, as the Christian Church teaches — and actions are of less importance, then there is no chance for the cultivation of high morality. A visit to some of the colonies will help us to appreciate what sort of consciousness has been developed under the influence of Christianity. If Jesus could hasten his second coming, he would bitterly regret his visit to those lands that pass under his name. The very moment he would seek to land at any of these Christian colonies, he would be declared a prohibited immigrant on account of his not being an European. He is coloured and an Asiatic. His movements from district to district would be dependent on sanction from the officers concerned. He would not be allowed to breathe freely, to act freely and eat and drink freely. He would not be wanted. He would have to leave the territories inhabited by his own followers, he would not be allowed to earn his livelihood. This is the sort of consciousness that works in his own people, for he will labour under the colour bar. Have not non-European Christians been brought under such civil disabilities by their European co-religionists? And yet there was a conference at Westminster, the Bishop of Salisbury having been in the chair, where it was declared that there is a world call to the Church. The salvation of the world is through Christianization. If the Church has created that sort of consciousness, that niggardly feeling, that grabbing spirit that saps the life of other nations, the salvation of the greater part of humanity will rather seem to lie in seeing the Church religion disappear from the world.

May I ask the Bishop of Salisbury to give his best consideration to these facts? He should try to re-Christianize his own people. He should infuse first that spirit which characterises the teachings of the great Nazarene into the minds of various European nations,

wherever they may be, and then enter on his evangelizing campaign in the non-Christian world. Things as they stand at present in the Christian world give quite a different meaning to these proselytizing efforts of the Church. They seem to seek to bring the non-Christian races under the yoke of Europe, and to find out more and more nations to bear the burdens of the Whites. Have not the foreign missions been a complete failure? And is it not owing to that spirit which the European Christian have displayed towards others? A coloured Christian is not allowed to enter into the very house of God, as it is meant for the white races. What a mockery of religion! What a hypocrisy on the part of these people who, every morning and evening, say, when upon their knees, "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name!" Do they regard other creatures of God as their brethren equally sons of God? Do they believe in the brotherhood of man and the universal fatherhood of God? Do they practise the sayings of the Master: "My Father and your Father are one"?

In short, the religion of the Church as it stands at present, so far from helping to edify mind and soul, degrades the average human consciousness into something far worse than animal consciousness, and for obvious reasons as I have pointed out. If to please God or to enter into the kingdom of Heaven or to reconcile "man to God", to use the Church phrase, is taken to be the sole object of religion by a certain class of people; and if that object can only be attained by belief in certain dogmas or participation in certain sacraments, unaccompanied by actions, as are the tenets of the Christian Church, no wonder that it totally fails in developing that which is noble and good in humanity. If I have to please my God by believing in the grace of the blood, and that this is sufficient to secure my entry into Heaven, and no actions are needed, as the Church creed teaches, a selfishness will prevail and it will assert itself until human legislation

intervenes. This is not a mere theory; go and see with your own eyes the state of affairs obtaining in lands where the Christian element is in the ascendant. The Christians there do not admit that others have the right to call themselves men. No doubt things are not so in England or in some of the European countries, but that is owing to the emancipation of the countries from the canonical fathers. So long as the Church maintained its hold upon Europe, there was no sign of culture or science or knowledge that led to and sought to establish humanitarian principles.

Belief in God is belief in high morality — seeing that morality exclusively consists in the evolution of divine morals. This truth was taught by Islam and to-day it is dawning on some of the nobler minds in Christendom. Dean Inge remarked only the other day: "Islam taught us of God Who is the Creator and Nourisher of all the human race, Whose providence is universal, Whose beneficence reaches to every unit of humanity; Who makes no distinction between man and man, Whose blessings come to us without our merit or deserts, Whose rewards are thousandfold in compensation for one action; Who is not an angry God, but the most compassionate and merciful, and if He punishes His creatures it is for their reclamation; Who is ever thus forgiving, but if chastisement is more efficacious in reclaiming us from our iniquities, then only comes this punishment, otherwise God is all loving. Nay, the very punishment that comes from Him is the expression of His love in a harsh form." This is the God of Islam, Who through His attributes as *Rabb*, *Rahmān*, *Rahīm*, and *Mālik* exhibits such morals, and if man believes in Him as such, his actions should be the translation of his belief in these divine morals. The whole code of Islam shows the way to work out these morals. The peace and happiness of the human race lies in

accepting such a God, and not in accepting the angered Deity who demands propitiation and sacrifice.[7]

Self-expression and self-preservation

Let us quote here a few verses from chapter *The Believer* of the Holy Qur'ān:

> "Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers, and who shun what is vain, and who act for the sake of purity, and who restrain their sexual passions — except in the presence of their mates or those whom their right hands possess, for such surely are not blameable, but whoever seeks to go beyond that, such are the transgressors — and those who are keepers of their trusts and their covenant, and those who keep a guard on their prayers. These are the heirs, who inherit the Paradise. Therein they will abide" (23:1-11).

These verses contain two notable words in the original text. The one is *falāh*, which is commonly taken to mean success or achievement of one's aims. The other is *wāris*, meaning heir, which signifies that those spoken of in the above verses will not only attain to success in this life, but will continue to exist with success in the life hereafter, for an heir is one who survives a certain state. The literal sense of the word *falāh* is to unfold something in order to reveal its intrinsic properties. This very word is used in Arabic for tilling as well, which is to break open the surface of the earth, to make its dormant productive powers active. The English word plough seems to have been derived from this Arabic word *falāh*. It is one of the striking beauties of the Arabic language that its words in their primary sense denote the state which when realized conveys the import of the same. This is well illustrated in this very word *falāh* which not only means success, but also signifies what constitutes the real

success. Real success consists in working out all the capabilities of something to their perfection, that is the realization or unfoldment of the latent powers — self-expression. Thus the above Qur'anic quotation not only assures us of perfect self-expression in this life, if we pursue the course it prescribes, but also vouchsafes the attainment of self-preservation both in this life and the hereafter.

In fact, the two things, *viz.* self-expression and self-preservation, are at the root of all our struggle. Poets, painters, politicians consider their success to lie in their putting forth their thoughts, conceptions and policy before an appreciative public. The real source of all our activities and progress lies in these two incentives. Unfortunately, quite a wrong interpretation of these, on some occasions, leads individuals as well as nations to their own ruin or the ruin of others. To them self-expression is no more than the expression of one's wish and will, which they must make to prevail over the will of others. The mistake lies in taking self-expression, and that also in its wrong conception, as synonymous with, or as means of self-preservation. They ought in fact to have considered self-preservation only as a means to achieve the end — self-expression which in the Qur'anic sense means development of our latent faculties. But quite the reverse of this, they regard self-preservation as the end and self-expression, and that also in the wrong sense of the word, as a means to it. This perverse idea gave birth to a philosophy that wrought destruction in the world.

The definition is too clear to require any explanation. It aims at self-preservation at the expense of others. According to it, the secret of self-preservation lies in self-assertiveness, which has given birth to another wrong notion to the philosophy of struggle for existence and the survival of the strongest; according to which the weaker

has got no right to live on the earth of God but to subserve to the ends of the stronger. How far wrong interpretation can lead to the destruction of the world is best illustrated in the present war. It fosters a spirit of competition. Once captured with this idea, a man is capable of crushing every feeling of sympathy and goodwill in his anxiety to excel others. But Islam looks down with contempt at this sort of self-expression, which in reality, is self-assertiveness.

Self-expression is, in fact, the unfolding of the innate capacities and beauties that are embedded in the nature of man as a trust of God. It is through the expression of these that one can attain to spiritual heights resplendent with scintilla of divine attributes of God. It is a matter of great satisfaction that Europe of our generation is after all growing cognizant of the true spirit of religion and emerging out of the conventional forms of it. Man is hero-worshipper by instinct and, consequently, he has looked upon bowing to some superstitions as observance of religious obligations. Likewise mere faith in this or that dogma has been regarded by some as the aim as well as the end of religion. But this is a mistaken notion. Religion in sooth is the code of life which when followed leads one to a consciousness of inner beauties and helps him to convert them into actualities. All our actions spring from our beliefs, which therefore constitute the root part of religion.

Western people are, however, beginning to realize that religious perfection does not consist in the mere acceptance of a few dogmas of the Church. A feeling has now sprung up among some of them that they can also do what Jesus did. This reformed view of religion is, however, not an unmixed blessing. This class of people think that although human, they are capable of progressing right up to divine attributes as they believe Jesus did, and that

this object is attained not so much by active exercise of one's powers but through inactive meditation and by leading a retired, undisturbed life. It is also asserted that so long as one does not divorce himself of mentality — that which alone distinguishes man from an animal — he cannot attain the highest degree of beatitude. These and such-like other ideas are only the relics of by-gone beliefs which have not been shaken off entirely.

Europe has for centuries been in the habit of paying homage to man-worship in some form or other. The North and West of the continent adored Woden and Thor, while the South and East lauded Jupiter, Zeus, Apollo, etc., as gods. They were only men, but presented to the credulous in fantastic garbs. All these divinities of the heathens in Europe afterwards gave way to another human god and made room for him, some fifteen centuries ago, who was humble enough to give his epiphany "in the manger and on the cross."

However a new era has now dawned in these days. Jesus is looked upon not as God but as an elder brother, whose attributes we equally share and his divinity too. This belief is gradually furthering the thought that we can elevate ourselves as high as God and can possess and dominate every atom of the universe as God can, and this all not through any active effort on our part but by silent and calm contemplation. This smells strongly of the refined pantheism of the ancient India, according to which man could divest himself of his humanity, if he so wished, and become divine. But does this view at all fit in with what we really are? Cannot the slightest change in the atmosphere cause our destruction? The circumstances with which we are surrounded make us absolutely dependent on the outside agencies for our well-being and existence.

Let us take the very case of Jesus as a specimen from amongst those who from time to time have been taken to possess divine attributes, and see if this belief is borne out in his own words: "I cannot do anything myself" (John 8: 28); "Why callest thou me good?" "If I turn out the devil, it is by the help of the finger of God" (Luke 9:20); "My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). Do these expressions signify any possible vindication of the aforesaid claim?

There are others in the West who believe that huge wealth would be theirs if they could only contemplate that they are surrounded on all sides with wealth which is really theirs and that we could command, like God, all the sources of wealth to pour out their treasures at our feet, if we could by meditation attain to divinity as Jesus did. But here is a refutation of the above in the words of this our elder Brother: "Foxes have places for hiding, and birds have nests for them in the air, but the son of man has no place to rest his head in." Then he says on another occasion: "Of myself I can do nothing; of that hour and that day knoweth no man, neither the son." Those amongst us who are getting obsessed with the new-fangled idea that we can make ourselves great through mere meditation, would be well advised to study the chapter 38 of Job, in order to realize the limitation of human powers. No doubt that some of the sayings of these great personages, who are manifestations of some divine powers and in whom the spark of divine attribute embedded in their nature has grown into a full blaze of fire, contain certain words misleading to the common people. The notion that we can achieve equality to God seems to have arisen out of expressions like that of Jesus, who is reported to have said: "I am one with my Father." This expression no doubt signifies an obvious truth, but the interpretation put thereon is quite erroneous. A single

detached sentence out of the speech of a person is not sufficient to grasp his meanings.

It is desirable to have a wider survey of his sayings and to see that no such interpretation is put on some of his words as will clash with the sense or tenor of the rest of his speech. Had this been the criterion of determining the meanings of Jesus by his votaries, we are positive they would have been saved from the cross and man-worship. The same person who says on one occasion that he is one with his father utters the following words in a critical state of distress: "O my Father ! if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt" (Matthew 22:46). Can these be the words of one who is said to claim equality with God? The saying, however, is not valueless. It illustrates a great spiritual phenomenon which we frequently come across in the lives of the blessed amongst mankind. As a matter of fact, when a man completely subordinates his own will and desires to the will of God, all his actions and words partake of divine attributes. He becomes steeped in the colour of God, and this is the stage where he is one with God. It is this state that entitles Jesus to say: " I am one with my Father." Others have uttered similar words: "I am Bhagwan," *i.e.* god, come from the lips of Krishna. The hands of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) are declared to be those of God in the words of the Qur'ān (8:17).

Let us carefully study this other quotation of Jesus cited earlier:, "not as I will but as Thou wilt." What a guarded statement! He lays no claim to equality with God, but expresses his union with Him through his submission to the Most High. He has killed his own volition and has lost his individuality into that of the Father. His actions and words are only to work out the will of the Other. Is it strange then to find him say: "I and my Father are one,"

not on account of equality, but for reason of complete submission, and implicit subordination to the High Will? Self-surrender of Jesus has reached a stage where nothing comes between God and His devoted votary, may he be A or B. It is this truth that constitutes the essence of Islam, and to attain which a Muslim stands in prayer and other devotional practices prescribed in the Qur'ān.

It is quite illogical to claim equality with the Divine Being, or to suppose that divine mind is no more than our own in its evolved stage; and that this state of perfection in man is reached only through silent contemplation with eyes closed and at the expense of our mentality.

This method of achievement, too, is in reality another relic of old dogmas in the West. In order to press its many doctrines for acceptance, the Church has ever emphasized the fact that reason is no criterion to test the veracity of matters religious, which must command our blind allegiance. This phase of "new thought" now prevailing in the West is but the same divorce of reason, though it differentiates itself from the conventionalities of the Church. Again we are told that for such achievements the only thing needed is faith, while actions can be dispensed with. This idea they again inherit from the Church. Martin Luther, inspite of his bold departure from the established Christianity of his day, could not help falling into the same error and retained the principle of salvation through faith as the cardinal point of his creed. With him actions were nothing. "Believe in the atonement and you get salvation" was his religion, and it is repeated to-day by the so-called freed school of new thought, though in a new form. To get rid of your disease a kindred movement in the West — Christian Science — would advise you simply to close your eyes and imagine yourself enveloped in health all round, with your various faculties working properly and your cheeks to be ruddy

without resorting to any medical aid. They think their fancies will assume the form of realities, if they could firmly believe it to be so. I do not deny that imagination plays a considerable part in the build of physique, but I am not prepared to admit that it can bring about such effects as depend upon your dietetic faculties. You may control your appetite to a certain limit, but this will never give you strength such as you can gain by food alone.

There are some who are tempted to generalize from witnessing a few cases where a patient had been brought to health in this way. But they ignore many other circumstances attending each particular case, amongst which individuality of the patient plays a great part. Every case must be scrutinized on its own merits. One has also to make sure how far the individual's recovery is due to certain mesmeric effects under the wholesome and healthy influence of the active agent. We demand a plain test to establish the efficacy of the above process. Do not take your food for a week, but only imagine that you have done so. If you could then preserve your usual strength, vitality, your rosy complexion and the brightness of your eyes, I will come to believe in your theory of contemplation. So far I admit that you may subdue your appetite by slow degrees till you cultivate in you a power to keep fast for a long time.

Man by nature, in his undeveloped stage, loves ease and shirks exertion. As, for instance, there was a quest for the philosopher's stone, in the medieval ages, whose touch with base metal was believed to transform it into sterling gold. In these days too, we do believe in such a stone to amass heaps of gold, but this is no other than our personal effort. To obtain gold without labour was a specimen of the ignorance of medieval ages. Likewise, in the realm of spirituality the doctrine of "faith without deed" has its source in the same tendency to avoid effort.

Belief in the "blood" came to take the place of the philosopher's stone in spiritualities which could convert base human nature into highest morals in a single moment, although belief in this doctrine is practically non-existent to-day in many quarters in the West, but its place has been taken by one equally unintelligible and demoralizing. Contemplation is now believed to be the way to achieve all desires. To a limited extent, however, this new philosophy contains partial truth. Calm contemplation is no doubt a step in the right direction. It produces a certain kind of sensation to which the Western world was an utter stranger for so many centuries. This peculiar sensation is, however, the very first rung of the ladder in the spiritual upliftment, and not the top.

No one can deny that self-expression consists in the development of those powers in man, which distinguish him from lower animals. Conscious self forms the difference between the two. The development of mind depends upon contemplation, and the latter is only possible through silence and calm meditation. It is therefore indispensable to retire from the bustle of life to some secluded place and give ourselves up to meditation if we want to cultivate our various faculties of mind. But it is not a new revelation. For this very purpose the sages of old in the East isolated themselves from human society. In order to attain self-expression they took up their abode in the inaccessible recesses of forest glades and mountain fastnesses. Certain manifestations of some of the spiritual powers were no doubt made by these people; but this course did never prove practicable for the real benefit of human society. Buddha commands the spiritual homage of millions, yet very few of them could adopt his mode of life as a code of theirs.

Another strong argument against the aforesaid method lies in the very nature of man, who is sociable by

instinct. The realization of many of his powers is closely bound up with others in relations of mutual inter-dependence. There are many other traits of human character which can come into play and flourish only in the midst of society. Courage, patience and benevolence are some of the highest virtues in man. There lies not the slightest chance for one to exercise these virtues if he has secluded himself from human society. Similarly, perseverance and fortitude in the face of obstacles are extremely essential for the development of spirituality. All these grow through exercise and when someone is placed in adverse circumstances — a thing only attainable in social life. We prize so much the development of our will-power. Can we get it in its different phases if in secluded life one is never chanced to face evil and temptation of various character? If no injustice is done in our presence or no one injured, how can we bring into play our sense of equity, justice and sympathy? Only very few inner powers do not require society for their cultivation.

Corresponding to our external senses we have internal senses as well. Besides the apparent eye and ear, we are gifted with inner organs of sight and hearing which produce clairvoyance and clairaudience. We can sometimes read the feelings of others. But these few powers do not constitute in themselves the height of spirit-force. They are some of the gifts of God to man. Islam has laid down an efficacious course to attain this stage and achieve many other kindred things. But the Muslim divines never encouraged such acquisitions, as it is not the goal of life. Yet the curiosity-loving nature hankers after it. Such-like things are no doubt obtained through asceticism, but the method kills many noble traits of humanity. Sometimes they become a source of pain, as in the case of clairvoyance.

Real spiritual elevation as expounded by Islam and the rules to achieve which are laid down in the Qur'ān, consists in the state when human mind is clarified into a mirror to reflect divine will, when every one of his organs works in accordance with the will of God — in short, when each movement of his, (hearing, seeing, sitting, walking, etc.,) should completely harmonize with the will and wish of God. This is the spiritual height at which man becomes the beloved of God, and it is to this stage that a tradition from the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) refers in the following words: God sayeth, "O men! only follow thou My laws, and thou shalt become like unto Me, and then say 'Be' and behold 'It is.'" God sayeth, "The person I hold as beloved, I am his hearing by which he heareth and I am his sight by which he seeth, and I am his hand by which he holdeth, and I am his feet by which he walketh."

I have already referred to the first step towards the attainment of these capabilities as consisting in silence and contemplation. I have also mentioned that there is a sort of pleasant sensation which the West is beginning to perceive. But the error lies in regarding it as the be-all and end-all of spiritual evolution. The very course that is followed to attain this sweet sensation betrays that a wrong ideal has been set up. For instance, the method prescribed is first of all to concentrate one's attention on a fixed point to avoid one's thoughts getting scattered; for, as a matter of fact, real meditation depends upon concentration of mind. As a typical practice we are directed to have our house closed with all its holes plugged, and hold our meditation in a quarter far removed from the din of life, and then compose a poem, solve a philosophical problem or draft, say, a piece of composition not containing words with a particular letter. We will thus secure ourselves against the disturbing effect of sense-organs. The object of the whole of this process is, so to

speak, the drugging of the organs of sense by force of concentration. We admit that by thus drugging the senses, the mind will begin to make a manifestation of some of its wonderful capacities. But if we could weaken and hush up our sense-organs by drugging them in some other way and obtain the same result, where on earth lies the difference between the two methods, *viz.* .concentration of mind through such seclusion and the drugging of sense-organs?

For instance, in the East such a state of senses is created through hashish — a kind of herb having an intoxicating effect different from that of fermented liquor or opium. Liquor produces a sort of buoyant emotion in the mind, while opium atrophies our senses, but hashish has a dulling effect upon the whole system and concentrates the mind on anything towards which it may happen to be attracted. If one under the influence of hashish should close his eyes and imagine his soul to be soaring in the sky, he will really feel so. This is why, in Persian, the stuff is called *falaksair*, *i.e.* ramble in the sky. I say this, on the ground of personal experience of the effect of this drug when I took it for trial some thirty years back. I have also experienced the pleasant sensation arising out of the meditation in question, and am therefore in a position to compare the two, which are very much akin to each other. Both consist in a sort of an intoxicating effect and both are the outcome of so much weakening the sense-organs as not to disturb mind-activities. It is quite immaterial whether this drugging is the result of hashish or of any other method to avoid distraction of mind. The net result following thereon is nearly the same, *viz.* deadening of senses and a pleasant sensation.

We would therefore invite the attention of our friends connected with such movements that they may have silent contemplations by all means, but the pleasure resulting therefrom is not self-expression. Self-expression

demands a difficult course to be pursued beset with manifold obstacles, and requiring great self-discipline. Over and above all the drawbacks of this new thought, there is another difficulty which makes all our attempts to avoid disturbance of mind futile. We may retire from the bustle of life and shut ourselves up in a solitary closet. We may thus secure our sense-organs against all disturbing influences. But how can we manage to quiet down the storm of all those conflicting ideas, impulses and passions that surge in our bosom? As human beings we are of the earth and bound to it by numerous ties. Our interests are sometimes in danger while again certain boisterous passions swell our breast. Such-like circumstances are sure to undo all above said efforts for the concentration of mind. To obviate this difficulty some persons or some religious systems would have us crush these passions, a remedy wrong in itself. These passions in their primary form are the very impulses which originate in the instinctive life-tendency in man.

As I have said before, self-expression presupposes the feeling for self-preservation which, in its turn, consists in the satisfaction of these same passions. Consequently, by killing our passions we deal a death-blow to our very self, thus defeating our object of self-expression. Keeping all these considerations in view, Islam has struck upon a golden mean. We should have self-expression as the *summum bonum* of life and self-preservation as a means towards it. In other words, the feeling of self-preservation must be there, but only in so far as it should promote the purpose of self-expression. Before I attempt to show what method of silence and contemplation I recognize as the first step towards attainment of spiritual perfection as prescribed by Islam, I would invite the reader's attention to another point.

The sense of self-preservation germinates from self-consciousness. Animal consciousness is a bundle of only a few blind impulses, devoid of the consciousness of individuality. For instance, the impulse of hunger, when aroused, demands gratification, without any consciousness, on the part of the animal, of the fact that it is instrumental to self-preservation. Man, on the other hand, knows not only that these impulses are the springs of his various activities, but also that he owes his very life to the satisfaction thereof. This creates self-consciousness. This individual consciousness is responsible for the sense of personal rights in man and the question of mine and thine. This is also found sometimes in lower animals but to a very limited extent, and receives its full development only in man.

Individual consciousness, if not properly regulated, makes us encroach upon the rights of others for the sake of self-preservation. It is to put a check on the irregularities of this consciousness that several laws have been framed. As a matter of fact, man's utility to society and the development of his own mind both depend upon his evolution from this stage to the moral one. His interests must not be confined to his own person, but should extend to other members of the society. So long as his outlook is limited to his own personal interests. he has not risen above the life of flesh. He breathes in a higher atmosphere and steps in the sphere of a moral life when he links up his interests with those of the society, leaving behind his selfish, sordid desires. This moral state partakes of spiritual lustre when he outgrows the stage at which he respects the interests of others with a view to further his own, and is prepared to sacrifice his own interests for those of others, or in other words when his individual consciousness gives way to race consciousness.

By race I do not mean any particular nationality one belongs to, but the whole human race. But unfortunately there is another obstacle on the way which hinders his progress. Instead of widening the sphere of his interests to the whole of humanity his views become narrow and cramped by delimiting the scope of his social usefulness with the ideals of nationality, that is his self-consciousness, is transformed into national consciousness. Even then he is self-sacrificing for others, but the field of this sacrifice covers only the particular community or nation to which he belongs. This germinates that ignoble feature of patriotism which is responsible for social prejudices and national rivalries. It gives birth to wars when nations rise against nations and cause human devastation. In individuals, the impulse of self-centred selfishness tends to produce law-breakers and usurpers of the legitimate rights of others, but the activity of this impulse in communities and nations is responsible for wars. The root cause of all such crimes in individuals or nations would always be found in their false worship of this impulse of self-consciousness.

A study of human history reveals the fact that wars are waged because particular nations want either to protect their interests against others or sacrifice those of other nations to theirs. The word patriotism does, no doubt, sound very sweet, but then it has been the cause of shedding human blood in the past as well as in the present. Those who have not progressed beyond the stage of individual or national consciousness to that of human race consciousness, are yet far removed from the spiritual realm. Just as the moral stage is not reached so long as a man moves in the sphere of individual consciousness, similarly, the spiritual window is not opened to one whose attention is yet confined to national consciousness. The true spiritual state is the concomitant of human race consciousness. There is a still higher stage beyond this

state of consciousness. It is only attained when one sacrifices his personal interests for the sake — not of the community which he is a member nor of the race to which he belongs — of the whole of the universe.

When all impulses of self-aggrandizement at the expense of anything in the universe are dead, then he has truly succeeded in scaling the loftiest pinnacle of spiritual grandeur and glory. His interests are then identified with those of every atom in nature. This is the stage of the point of cosmic consciousness of human self-expression and the final stage of preparation for his true self-expression. Here, his spirituality becomes full-fledged. His physical nature has become subsided and has partaken of divine nature. He has entered into the holy precincts and a sort of union is created between him and God. It was in such a state of spirituality that Jesus exclaimed: "I am one with my Father."

How mistaken is one's assertion when he says that God's interests centre in him alone. Rather every atom in the whole of the universe is the object of His interest. Let no one, therefore, claim that his mind is the mind of God, unless he has moulded his entire self, his thoughts as well as actions, in consonance with the will and wish of the Lord and Evolver of the worlds. This is the ultimate stage of cosmic-consciousness, and it is attained when one's movements, one's eating and drinking, one's prayer and fasting and other religious rites are in thorough submision to the will of God. Here it was that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) proclaimed through divine revelation: "Verily, my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are for Allah, the Lord of the worlds. No associate has He and surely this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit (to Him)" (163,164)

This is the picture of one who is the superman of the Qur'ān. Let us compare this superman to that of Neitzsche. Both share a desire to live — an instinct of self-preservation. But one links up his self-preservation with this world, and so with him self-expression consists in self-assertiveness; while the other regards his self-expression as dependent on the evolution of those powers, which partake of divine glory on a human scale and which consists in serving the whole universe at his own discount.

I have already pointed out that silent contemplation can never remain undisturbed, so long as passions are not subdued in man's mind, and also that any attempt to crush these passions is tantamount to suicide as self-expression is possible only through self-preservation, which again depends for its existence on the same passions. Consequently, the peace of mind and concentration of thoughts cannot be attained simply by retiring to solitude, but it comes within human reach through a mastery over passions. But this control of low desires is only possible when individual consciousness, passing through various stages, say, family, national and racial consciousness is sublimated into cosmic-consciousness. Real contemplation and the good thereof is only the lot of one possessed of this cosmic-consciousness. It is meet therefore that instead of detaching ourselves from the world and attempting to subside sense-disturbances through certain mind-exercises, we should try to feel the presence of God in loneliness and by reflecting on His attributes as the Maintainer, Nourisher, and Evolver of all the worlds, we should cultivate a sense that His interest embraces the whole universe and not of our own self, and we have to follow His ways in our dealing with the universe. Such contemplation will enable us to enter into the spiritual realm. This is the right path, along which we can walk in the footsteps of God. This is the truth, which Islam came to teach and realize.

To achieve the above object, no other course is more efficacious than that prescribed by Islam. And here I give the A, B, C of the course. It enjoins upon its followers to rise very early and, after proper ablutions, to stand in a most submissive attitude in the presence of God. Thus a Muslim stands in the stillness of early dawn, generally in a place free from the din of life, and meditates upon those attributes of his Maker, which are given at the very outset of the Qur'ān — *Al-hamdu lillāh-i Rabbil 'Aalamīn*, etc. All praise and glory is for Allah, the Creator, and Nourisher and Maintainer and Evolver of the whole universe, Whose beneficence gives us things we have need of and without our meriting them; Whose mercy gives us hundredfold reward for one action, and Who is Lord of the day of requital. This is the beginning of the Muslim prayer. The object of this recitation is not to glorify God and cite His praises. With Islam, divine glorification consists in human edification. God, as the Qur'ān says, is above needing our praises. By reciting these attributes of God in our prayers we are led to think how far we are in tune with Him. We are enjoined by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to imbue ourselves with divine attributes, and the recitation comes to enlighten us in this respect. It is through such meditation that the individual consciousness receives sublimation into cosmic consciousness, the Evolver of the world.

I would not at present dilate upon the various expressions in a Muslim's prayer, each and every one of which absorbs him in meditation. After the morning prayer the Muslim goes about his business with a strengthened heart to face all that would call into play his various powers. After noon he would once more repair to the Holy Presence, and calmly meditate on the same attributes of God. Thus retiring into solitude every second or third hour, five times a day, his contemplations help

him to cultivate a sense of cosmic consciousness. If, in the intervals, he finds any transgression on his part, repeated prayers to the Almighty are constant reminders to him of the real aim — the cosmic consciousness.

The Islamic prayer is, so to say, a running stream of pure water of cosmic consciousness in which the Muslim's heart takes his dip five times a day. Is it possible for one thus trained, to be narrow-minded, selfish or overbearing to an extent which would lead to crimes, private or national? The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is reported to have remarked to his Companions: "If you have a stream flowing by your house wherein you may take a bath five times a day, is it possible that your bodies should remain unclean?" The reply was a decided no. "The stream," added the Holy Prophet, "is your prayer five times a day." We, Muslims, say our prayers in congregation but each time there are some portions which we perform by ourselves. I admit that prayer with many is a mechanical thing and therefore inefficacious, but abuse of a thing is not the defect of the institution. There is yet another prayer which is said all alone, at the dead of night, in order to have perfect concentration in the said meditation.

Let us revert to the verses from the Holy Qur'ān which I gave in the prelude. It is said therein that only those would be able to develop their powers or achieve self-expression, who pray to God in a spirit of thorough submissiveness and fear. This is followed by a recapitulation of those duties which one owes to his fellow beings. The object of this is to remind us that self-expression, which is only obtainable through keeping up to cosmic consciousness, depends upon the fulfilment of our obligations to others. The spark of this sense is kept alive by giving it a practical garb in the discharge of these duties.

In the first place, attempt has been made to cultivate in us a sense and then practical exercises have been set to maintain it. The last verse holds out a promise of obtaining possession of *firdaus*, or paradise, which amounts to a perfect stage of self-expression. The word *firdaus* literally means, "full fructification of seeds into garden." The course prescribed to attain cosmic consciousness is that we should jealously guard our prayers by acting upon the words cited, in the comfort of life, in all its activities, otherwise our prayer is a farce. The perfection is reached when we constantly move under the sense of cosmic consciousness thus reminded in prayer. It should be the background of all our movements.

As a student of religion, I have been struck with this feature of Islam that where other sages conceived this truth in a very complicated manner and with great difficulty made it visible to the layman, Islam has not only brought it within reach of common understanding but has also given it a practical shape. To cultivate this feeling of cosmic consciousness, people retire into solitary woods. The banks of the sacred Indian rivers are resorted to for this very purpose. But Islam has elevated its follower to this pinnacle of spiritual glory, in a practical way, by keeping him in the world, making him fulfil the obligations he owes to his fellow beings and putting him in the service of the teeming creation of Allah, at the same time reminding him of his real goal and the most efficacious way to achieve it.[8]

THE SOUL AND ITS FUNCTION

The rise of life and the appearance of soul in material frame is as yet an unsolved mystery. Our physico-chemical science seems yet beyond giving an intelligible explanation of this sudden and novel process and, because apparently there seems to exist a sort of conflict between the soul and the matter, the exponents of dualism assert that they are two different entities. Besides, the soul when fully evolved rules the body — the animated organism in human form — and it is argued, therefore, that it must be different from the body. But the vivifying principle called "life" does the same thing in every organism. If soul controls the body, life also brings lifeless matter under its complete submission. Life, on its appearance, becomes general controller and arranger of everything in the system; but life itself in its turn becomes subordinate to the soul. If the dualist therefore thinks that the soul comes from without, others theorize in the same way about life; and the reason which makes such an opinion possible in some cricles is the sudden departure in the "habit" of the matter when, from a stage of seeming lifelessness, it becomes "quick". But we know that this rise of vivifying principle is the outgrowth of the very matter in which it is found and of which it assumes control. Consequently, it becomes difficult to accept the above view without hesitation.

The appearance of electricity is a good illustration in point. It absolutely rises instantaneously whenever there is a combination of two given metals and a certain liquid

matter. Its appearance is as much sudden as its subsequent dominance which it assumes over objects out of which it had grown. This natural phenomenon proves conclusively that there are things which, although different in appearance and characteristics from their components, are yet one with those out of which they had arisen.

Besides this, we witness one other phenomenon in all stages of evolution. Every material organism not only sustains its existence at the expense of the one lower than it, but is also dominant over it. Whichever organism intervenes, two evolutionary stages, which it lives upon and regulates the one immediately below it, in its turn it becomes fond of and subject to the control of that form of matter which in the course of growth stands immediately above it. For example, every member of the organic order lives upon another in an inorganic form and regulates it too. But when this organism assumes animal shape it becomes vested with diverse impulses and emotions. These emotions now practically rule the vivifying principle which, under the dictates of that rule, destroys all other lower animal organisms to prolong its existence and to promote its growth. These impulses, limited in function in their primary stage, become passions and predilections in the human frame and, after passing through another process of evolution, they become full-fledged into what is termed the "soul". The soul, thus born, assumes control over emotions and passions, which in their turn dominate other organisms in the universe. By viewing a few evolved forms, which seemingly diverge in their characteristics and features one from the other, and observing the new departure that becomes manifest in the life of the matter, or such other superficial signs, it would be nothing but jumping to conclusions to say that something foreign has introduced itself into the organisms, and that the new form of the organisms did not grow out of its older one. This is due to our want of knowledge and it is

expected that coming generations of scientists would remove the veil of mystery which seemingly envelops this process of nature.

At every appreciable stage of departure in the course of its growth, matter becomes invested with absolutely new clothes and characteristics. Vivifying principles, impulses and passions, discretion — called life, consciousness and soul in popular parlance — are different features of the said new departure. They may be sudden in their apprearance and their emanation inexplicable in physico-chemical terms, but they evolve from the same material. If we regard life or soul as coming from without and not rising from the body, what about those impulses which for the first time make their appearence in animal organism? They as well differ in their characteristics from life and matter. They rule both, and help the functions and combination of life. Should they be also taken as coming from without? For they possess features similar to those for which life and soul have been taken to be not from the body. No one till now has advanced this theory.

Impulses and passions have always and by all been accepted as outgrowth of the body. Difference in animal impulses and human passion is only of a degree. They partake of the same nature. In human form natural impulses become clothed with individual consciousness. Does not this individual consciousness constitute the real material which builds human discretion, the chief characteristic of the soul? If discretion, therefore, for its origin can rightly be traced to individual consciousness — sum total of human passions — and our passions in their original form of animal impulses emanate from the various inorganisms and organisms specialized under the control of life is not body, then, the mother of the soul?

Constructive ability

The function of the soul in the build of humanity leads us to the same conclusion. Human soul, when not hampered by carnal desires, is only a conscious constructive ability in our frame to create high morals and spiritualities out of low passions. They are to be sublimated into morality which, when highly cultivated, gives birth to spirituality. Morality does not mean extinction of passions and killing of impulses. It consists of controlling and balancing them, and to find out proper occasion and place for their use. This is done by the soul. The soul, therefore, is only a creative agency which evolves perfect man out of a brute. Its chief function is to make un-erring discretion between the beneficial and harmful aspect of our passions and to accept the former and reject the latter for our further growth. Does not soul do the same thing that life does in animated organism? As life is the controller of material in the build of the physical part of our nature, so soul is the arranger of another kind of material in the make of our moral and spiritual side. Their function is the same, the difference being in the nature of the material they respectively use. They both are creative agencies in the animal and human form; one works unconsciously and the other consciously, as the material life works upon is indeed devoid of consciousness, while the groundwork of soul is individual consciousness. In short, life and soul are the two different names of that constructive ability in the build of humanity which makes un-erring discrimination between the useful and the deleterious.

We know that coal and diamond come from the same material. They both belong to the inorganic world. Their growth results from incorporation and not from assimilation. But difference in proportion in the material used creates these two different things. Similarly a man and an animal, as remarked before, take the same material

for their frame, but here again the difference arises from the difference in the proportion of the material used respectively in these combinations of matter. All this material is existing in chaotic condition in the universe, but the unconscious constructive ability peculiar to every mould of matter makes scrupulous discrimination in accepting the useful proportion and rejecting the baneful. Similarly, all men are clothed with equal impulses. Prophets and thieves are physiologically the same, and possess and experience similar passions. But the creative agency in man called "soul" becomes strong in the latter class and creates perfect men. If other men are not so, the said agency has been hampered in its course. The same we do find in lower forms of matter. Life sometimes counteracted by other forces produces diseased growth.

Thus soul, life and constructive ability are different names of the same functionary working under different circumstances and in different stages of material growth. Muslim philosophers and divines have been very clear in this respect. They acknowledged possession of soul by every form of matter; as, for instance, mineral soul, vegetable soul, animal soul and human soul were the names given by them to the same constructive ability which works in these different worlds.

No doubt we know very. little of soul. But do we know more of life or of the said unconscious constructive ability than what we know of soul? There are very many other things in the universe which are as well a mystery to us for their appearance and the part they play — electricity, for example. Soul is as much mystery to us as life. The utmost we know of them is their function, and it is to make discrimination between the good and the evil. What is done unconsciously by life in build of body the same is done consciously by soul in framing spirituality.

The cause of difference is obvious. The material which life works upon does not possess consciousness, while the material for the soul to build spiritual man is human consciousness — the sum-total of various passions and impulses which the soul has to sublimate into ethics, philosophy and religion. The soul when risen enters the body in her creative capacity. Man was not made to live the life of an animal. God made him to rise higher and higher. The real objective is accomplished under the unerring discrimination of the soul between right and wrong. Thus the soul, though a mystery to us, can on account of the function it performs rightly be styled as an index of the Divine Command under which man, vested with various capacities, has to bring them to perfection. The word *Rabb* in the Qur'ān, which as explained before is a name of God, means Creator, Sustainer and Evolver. Man has to evolve under the command of his *Rabb*, Who has created in him various capacities, and this command is put into force through the soul. This secret was revealed to us in the following verse of the Qur'ān: "And they ask you about the soul; say: 'The soul is by the commandment of my *Rabb* (God), and you are not given aught of knowledge but a little'" (17:85).

Thus life and soul are creative agencies in human frame; one works out the physical and the other the spiritual side of our nature. But they do not come from without. They arise at particular stages of the development of matter. As a matter of fact every atom has in it the essentials that go to the making of human soul. It is a truth which has been fully demonstrated by the following verses of the Qur'ān:

> "And certainly We create man of an extract of clay, then We make him a small life-germ in a firm resting-place, then We make the life-germ a clot, then We make the clot a lump of flesh, then We

make (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothe the bones with flesh, then We cause it to grow into another creation. So blessed be Allah, the Best of creators" (23:12-14).

The above-quoted verses declare that the human frame was originally made of an extract of clay from the earth which, as the Qur'ān says elsewhere, is the result of a process of the burning of the gas. Similarly, elsewhere in the Qur'ān we are told that this our planet was originally in a liquid state. Any detailed reference to this point would be unwarranted digression from our main theme, so we are content to say that, according to the Holy Qur'ān, the earth is an evolved stage of the matter arising out of burning gas, and the man the outcome of some more successive evolutionary processes.

Speaking of the various stages of evolution, the above verse uses the two conjunctives, *Summa* and *Fa*. The former is used in Arabic when there is a period between two stages or degrees of a certain action, and the latter when the different stages follow one another unremittingly. Accordingly in the above quotation *summa* intervenes the "extract of clay" and the "germ of life," which stand widely apart from each other. But *fa* is used to connect one stage with another after the "germ of life" has taken root upto the stage of flesh. We have then the conjunctive *summa* repeated when the germ of life assumes shapes of bone and flesh, and is at a distance from the stage when it becomes permeated with soul. The word of the Holy Qur'ān, "Then We caused it to grow into another creation," point to a new "mode of being" which man would assume, but it certainly would not come into us from without. It is latent in us.

This one single theory, that soul and body are not one, but two distinct entities, has been the source of endless views in all systems of religions and schools of

thought to the detriment of the welfare of man. Another similar theory is that of the transmigration of soul. These have led people for ages to seek the solace of their mind in what is known as "yog", or atonement, hermit's life, and other practices of false austerities. They opined that soul and body have nothing in common; the former is "held" by the latter, and real salvation lies in rescuing it from that bondage. To suppress all kinds of human passions was held in great esteem. Hence it is that we have the institutions of hermits in endless forms in different societies the world over. This again is the chief drawback of the teaching that people ascribe to Buddha. It is supposed to ordain that total isolation from all worldly connections is the best means of suppressing earlthy passions and desires and hence the only passport to the haven of everlasting bliss. Attainment of spiritual purity deemed possible only through the cutting asunder of all worldly ties, a distinctly unnatural creed! Thus the belief that soul and body are two different entities introduced different kinds of asceticism, and monasticism was also adopted for the welfare of the soul, with celibacy as its necessary condition. Such institutions have never been a nursery of healthy morals, but have germinated moral leprosy and retarded progress of civilization.

Some fleshes as forbidden food

Matter in every stage of its evolution lives for its further growth chiefly on that form of its development which stands immediately previous to it. If the vegetable kingdom provides chief food to animals, they in their turn appear in some form on the human table to provide the best nutrition. Every kingdom thus supplies groundwork for the production of the coming one, especially in matter which conspicuously differentiates the former from the one standing previous to it. In other words, what differentiates between two forms of growth immediately lower or superior to each other, works as a bedrock to carry out

further growth. The new element in the coming order is to be evolved from what differentiates its immediate lower order from the one previous to the latter. Vegetation in its most evolved shape exhibits locomotion, which evokes to its utmost in the animal kingdom but consciousness is the distinctive feature in animal life.

Consciousness consists of several emotions and impulses which are commonly possessed by man and lower animals. These impulses are the offspring of animal organism, and stand as differentia between the vegetable and animal kingdoms, and act as constructing material for further progress in human frame. These passions present their full exhibition in some animals, but they are to be refined and balanced within moderate bounds to make man of the brute. A goat is "poor in spirit", but it is not morality, it is a natural impulse which needs balancing to make it a true morality. The carnivorous show ferocity and courage, while the herbivorous generally exhibit humility and timidity. If camel exhibits anger at its height, cow fully possesses that impulse which, when exercised within moderate bounds, becomes true meekness and modesty. Pig is only an incarnation of lust and a full exhibition of dirt-loving nature. These animals are different complexes of the same material. But the difference in shape and passions follows the difference of the measure and proportion in which their original ingredients have been specialized. Thus every different combination of elements in animal life creates different passions, and will carry them along with it wherever it goes. Therefore flesh of such animals which exhibit passions in their worst form should not make an article of human diet. Morals of the animals we eat must affect our morality. This explains the rationale of placing flesh of certain animals in the category of prohibited food under certain religious systems.

In short, these various impulses and passions which became evolved in animal organism are to be sublimated into high ethics and morality, not only to create social order, but to produce true humanity which in its full-fledgement will act as groundwork for further progress — life beyond the grave. But this process of sublimation solely depends upon our knowledge of that "measure of moderation" which in different respects acted as guide to atoms in their every stage of evolution from ethereal speck to human frame. If constructive ability unconsciously kept that measure before it in discriminating between the useful and the deleterious, it did not matter much, as the growth upto human organism was unconscious. But humanity brings a new starting-point — something is to be evolved out of consciousness and the constructive ability must work consciously with guidance in some conscious form, i.e., revelation from Creator. If a rain in material form comes from above to give rise to life for the build of material organism, which reaches its perfection in human form the further growth, which is intellectual and spiritual, needs a spiritual rain ; hence the Qur'ān compares itself and other sacred books to rain.[9]

ANGELS: GUIDES IN SPIRITUALISM

God is the best guide, and after Him the nature that He has created. He reveals His will to us by His messengers as well as through His working in the universe. The former medium plays a dominating part in the sphere of religion while science deals with the latter. The teachers of religion give us certain laws of life, the final aim and object of which is to attain to such a state of spiritual growth as shall enable us to receive messages from our own Creator. There may be various ways of achieving the required state of spiritual growth, but there must be one way which is shorter than the rest, and if the Qur'ān reveals it, as it claims to do, the finality of its revelation in this respect is established. Islam does not close the door on divine message to humanity as the following verses show:

> "And (as for) those who strive hard for Us. We shall certainly guide them in Our ways. And Allah is most surely with the doers of good" (29:69).
>
> "(As for) those who say, Our Lord is Allah, then continue in the right way, the angels descend upon them, saying: Fear not, nor be grieved, and receive good news of the Garden which you were promised.
>
> "We are your friends in this world's life and in the Hereafter, and you have therein what your souls desire and you have therein what you ask for. A

welcome gift from the Forgiving, the Merciful" (41:30-32).

In the last quotation we read of guardian angels, and before proceeding any further, I would like to say something as to the Muslim conception of angels. Everything in nature, even though it be in the form of dead matter, exhibits a sort of mentality in observing the laws prescribed for the exhibition of its properties.

When brought under the conditions laid down for it, every form of matter gives out what is latent in it, and that with precision, and with a mathematical exactitude which is not discernible even in man with all his advantages of intellect and mentality. If the mind is a great guide, dumb and dead nature seems to possess stronger mentality than falls to the best of us sentient beings. Angels, in Muslim theology, are the sentient beings that work out the varied potentialities reposed in the diverse manifestations of nature. They act within prescribed bounds, and do not know how to violate them. Says the Qur'ān:

> "And to Allah makes obeisance every living creature that is in the heavens and that is in the earth, and the angels (too), and they are not proud. They fear their Lord and do what they are commanded" (16:49-50).

The Arabic word for angel is, in the highest degree expressive, carrying, in fact, two meanings: first, potentialities and, secondly, angels. If, then, the potentialities of nature are without number, so too are the angels. We read in the Qur'ān:

> ". . . And none knows the hosts of your Lord but He. And this is naught but a Reminder to mortals" (74:31).

Every passion, every moral impulse and every phase of spirituality is a potentiality, and has an angel to work it out whenever they come under conditions required for their revelation.

How does it stand, then, with the human mind? Sometimes, without any association of ideas at all we are impelled to do good. Some finer feeling in us, though dormant for the moment and without apparent reason for being aroused, becomes suddenly active and we are invited to do good. This impulse towards good, we Muslims, ascribe to the angels. If we listen to such angelic calls and follow their invitation, they in their turn are encouraged and begin to guard us against any evil step which we may be tempted to take. Thus every function becomes twofold. They invite us to good and warn us against evil. And further, if we are obedient to them, they become our guardians in the third stage. In this evolved stage of spirituality, man is visited by them; sometimes they appear to him in human form, but more often in vision. This may seem to others only a species of hallucination or trick of imagination, but it is a reality to those who are spiritually advanced. No materialistic explanation of such fantastic experiences as these can possibly affect my belief so long as the messages, or words of advice, come to us (as we believe them to have come) from angelic realms; for they are of real value in the moulding of our lives and produce marvellous results. Services which angels render to those who have acted submissively as wards under their guardianship are the measure of their ministry. Man becomes master and they his ministers, his servants.

I have given a very brief account of the work of the angels. Before I continue, something should be said as to the influence of spirits, other than "angels", upon the destiny of man. If the various potentialities of nature are

being worked out by corresponding mentalities which we call "angels", those potentialities do nonetheless cause harm in the world when wrongly used; and if sometimes man becomes impelled to do wrong by some prompting which there is nothing in the outer world at the moment to suggest, we Muslims ascribe such evil experiences to certain beings called "evil spirits". By spirits here I do not mean the souls of the departed; I simply mean such beings as have direct and definite connection with those potentialities. Thus, if we receive good and evil inspirations, we ascribe them respectively to good and evil spirits; the angels being the former.

If in the spiritualistic movement angels are the guides and guardians, a Muslim cannot say anything against them; but if they come from "ghost-land", as it is called, the belief is not a healthy one. Every spiritualist feels comforted when he claims to have the benefit of the guide; he lends a willing ear to its suggestions and suffer gladly the mutilation or stagnation of his own individual judgment. First of all, it is a very difficult thing to distinguish between the inspirations coming from a guide or angel and those arising from the working of our own subconsciousness. Subconsciousness sometimes remains at work for hours and brings us to a certain conclusion. As we cannot ascribe this conclusion to any apparent cause or association of ideas, we at once assume that it emanates from a spirit or guide. We may not be able to detect the harm in it, and we may commit wrong. A Muslim cannot ascribe any inspiration of his to the angels, unless such inspiration is consistent with the requirements of morality conscience and the Qur'anic laws.

I have known many spiritualists who would hesitate to do some good thing even because their "guide" had advised against it. Again, it is a recognized theory among spiritualists that only such departed souls return to visit

those left on earth as have some imperfection in them by reason of which they are bound to this planet. Those of advanced spirituality, on the other hand, when they leave the earth, are forthwith translated to the higher regions and never return again. If this is the case, what guidance can we receive from those earthbound spirits? Nevertheless, it has, unfortunately, become a fashion with many to speak of their "guide". Some are genuinely in earnest about it, but I fail to see how such guidance is ever likely to help man's growth. The very word "guide" creates a sort of psychology prejudicial to the spirit of independence and fatal to freedom of thought. There must be some reasonable limit to tutelage, but to remain always a ward is eminently undesirable. In Islam we are free from such conditions; for even our guardian angels become our ministers ere all is done.[10]

Concentration of mind

There is nothing new in the world. The Western world has become disillusioned and is only beginning to see religious matters as they really are. Like a man suddenly awakened from a sound sleep by some imminent and pressing danger, who flies blindly to the first place of refuge that comes in his way, and regards it as a new haven, so is the condition of the Western mind which, freed at last from the shackles of the Church, jumps to the very first thing which seems to assure it of some new light and illumination.

The "New Thoughter", or disciple of the New Thought movement, thinks that he has made a discovery; that his mind is the Mind of God; and that he himself is a potential God. We are all gods, think some of them and, after all, it is not a bad idea; and if godhood becomes so common, Jesus, Ezra and many other man-gods of the world, will very soon come to the common level of humanity.

The New Thought philosophy is, however, only a shadow of the Indian Vedantism in its advanced form, which teaches that everything in the Universe is God. If any animal can be accepted as God under Vedantism, why not man, who has been accepted by various persuasions as an image of God? The theory though not without some leavening of truth, is, however, not altogether free from danger. In every stage of the development of religious thought, God has been taken to be the fountain of all good; all that is best in the morality of any age is focussed in His name. If the human mind be, in every case a divine mind, then wickedness and righteousness may also pass alike for godliness.

Vedantism, in conjunction with the theory of Maya, also has tended to weaken the sense of responsibility and to enervate human zeal and activity. New Thought will do the same in the long run ; seeing that the dangerous effect, for example, of such unqualified beliefs among the adherents of Christian Science is patent to all men.

Islam has, however — by teaching that everything has come from God and represents some phase of the Divine Mind, — thrown a new and true light on the matter, and to make my point clearer, I shall have something to say: as to the Muslim sufi theory of emanation, which was inspired by certain sayings of the Holy Prophet and the Qur'ān: "I love to express Myself," so says God in the words of the Holy Prophet, and "I created the world", God say. So says the Holy Prophet, "Do not speak ill of the Universe, as I am the Universe."

These two sayings of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) solve the problem. God expressed and expresses Himself in the Universe; His various attributes became materialized and the world was created. The sufis, like Mohy-ud-Dīn Arabī, hold that *Al-Ghaib* — The Unseen, the Unknown, — was the first

attribute which became materialized in the beginning and its colour was dense pitch-black, and out of that substance came light, which gave birth to all that is in the heavens and the earth. It is interesting to note that present-day scientific researches carry us to somewhat the same conclusion.

We are told that the first form of matter was very dark, and out of it everything comes; and that the said dark substance is the repository of most wonderful things which gradually and inexhaustibly disclose themselves. We believe the same of God. Human knowledge cannot exhaust His attributes, nor their working. The different forces or potentialities of Nature are only materializations of the divine attributes. They assumed their firs material shape in the form of something extremely attenuated and very dark, which in scientific phraseology has been called "ether". In another stage of evolution it becomes "nebula".

The Qur'ān speaks of seven circular zones from the ethereal to the atmospheric strata, popularly called the "seven heavens", which are the seven stages of evolution; and at each stage the first form of matter has become grosser and grosser up to the atmospheric zone where it assumed the form of water, which, as rain, comes to our planet.

I do not here propose to deal with the creation of the earth; suffice it to say that the Qur'ān and the sayings of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) speak of some fiery gaseous condition of the earth in the beginning which, in course of time, became water which, in its further development, assumed the present shape of the earth. The earth, it is believed in Islam, possesses all the potentialities of the Universe; in other words, the earth in itself is a miniature of the whole universe and materializes all the known divine attributes

of God. This is the interpretation of the sayings of the Holy Prophet quoted above: "God says, Speak not ill of the Universe, as I am the Universe."

Now, again, began the process of refinement. It receives its start, as the Qur'ān says, by the coming of the rains. Hidden forces of the earth are set stirring, and the various components of our planet, under a further materialization, assume the shape of various species of vegetation, from the products of which man was called forth and everything appertaining to the earth accumulated in his body.

The human frame encloses the human heart, which in its form resembles the earth. It possesses everything of the earth but in the most refined form. In a word, material things become sublimated into conscious things. Just as the bowels of the earth contain its various minerals, so the human heart, in its recesses, finds place for emotions and passions, which in their cumulative form have been called human consciousness. In this way the Divine Mind, which began to express itself in ether, and its very clothing, became grosser and grosser, and again began to near its original condition in the form of the human mind. The human mind, therefore, has the germs of the Divine Mind. It is a materialized form of the Divine Mind, but not itself a Divine Mind.

An animal in some form works out the divine will, but it cannot be said to be God. To be more explicit — take the working of the sun. The sun, on the material plane, is the primeval source of everything. Iron has come out of the sun, yet it differs in its qualities from the sun. It is cold and black while the sun exudes heat and light. Iron is from the sun, but iron is not the sun. Similarly, the human mind is from the Divine Mind, but not the Divine Mind. Herein lies the difference between the human mind and the other products of Nature. While different compo-

nents of Nature materialize partially different divine attributes, the human mind accumulates all the attributes of God, and is capable of giving expression to them. Just as gold or silver or some precious metal rests in the bowels of the earth in the form of rocky ore, so these divine attributes lurk in the recesses of the human heart — we call them "passions", but they are passions in their first or natural condition. What we call lower or carnal passions are but the substrata of the divine building.

There is no hatred between man and his Creator that we should need a peace-maker to reconcile the two. But we do need a revelation that may enable us to arise from our nascent condition up to perfection. "To imbue yourself with divine attributes," as the Holy Prophet says, is the ideal of a religious life. As the ore passes into various processes of purification and is purged of a large quantity of refuse matter before it becomes shining gold, or as a rugged uneven rock has to be subjected to the constant chisellings of a sculptor before it assumes the shape of a beautiful marble statue, so human consciousness cannot become divine consciousness by simply sitting in circles or concentrating its thought on this thing or that, nor by reciting a set of formulae. That is mere farce. Sitting in a dark room where the holes and ventilators are plugged, to avoid any external agitation or disturbance, may help to secure concentration of mind; but what about the carnal passions, low impulses and uncontrollable hankerings of humanity? Unless these are properly plugged out, all our efforts at shutting out material distraction come to nothing.

Sometimes we succeed in securing concentration of mind, and thus are enabled to exercise our will power on others — which is the ideal, at present, of some of the modern Western religious movements — but it is not worth the time and labour spent on it. It is jugglery in a

graceful disguise. I have seen wickedness and the gift of exercising the will-power of the mind going side by side; that is not the divine mind. Evolution means purification and rising signifies detachment from lower things.

Take the instance of any fruit — say an apple. It lies in the seed, it is buried in the earth, then it becomes a seedling, a tree with leaves and flowers, and then fruit. In its final stage it has not the taste of leaves, wood or clay, and yet it has passed through all these forms of matter. Similarly, germs of divine attributes, buried in the clay of human consciousness, have to pass through various stages of growth before they reach their perfection. Each stage of growth is different from the one before, leaving behind it most of the ingredients of the former stage. Imperfection at any stage means retention of something belonging to the lower stage. As an unripe apple has got the taste of the leaves in it, and a leaf at its budding has more of the nature of wood than it has at the stage when it gives place to flowers, so the human mind cannot reach to the precincts of the Divine mind so long as it retains the characteristics of its animal state. If, by sitting in circles or by concentrating the mind on this or that thought, a person is able to get rid of the evil hankerings and tendencies that are specially to be observed in Western society, he is on the road to the goal.

Once I was invited to a dance party given by the Spiritualists, somewhere in Fleet Street. I could not understand what spirituality and conviviality could have in common with each other; but curiosity carried me to the banquet, and there I was introduced to a remarkable medium, who had had the satisfaction of securing the conversion to spiritualism of a very well-known scientist. His emaciated, pale face and his deep, dark, solemn eyes wistfully intent on far-off things, indicated some kind of ascetic pursuit in which the achievement of psychic power

by mind-concentration is the aim and purpose. He had come alone, which seemed suitable enough for he appeared, first and foremost, a solitary, an eremite, for whom a lodge in some vast wilderness would have been the correct setting.

The medium became interested in conversation with me, and we had much intesting and edifying discourse; but when the dance began, his face began to show signs of restlessness, his eye, roaming over the large room, were searching everywhere for a partner; but alas! his appearance was against him; even his will-power, if he possessed any, failed to attain fulfilment of his wishes. He could not get, try as he would, a partner for himself. After a few minutes he lost all interest in the conversation and had to request a friend to introduce him to some lady. The rest was a matter of course, and in a few minutes I found this same serious ascetic who, a few minutes before, was talking of things behind the veil, drowned in the whirl of ordinary — I might almost say commonplace — joviality. I do not for a minute mean to imply that he was an impostor and deliberately and of set purpose deceived others. I can believe in some of his achievements; but he is a self-deluded man if he thinks that he is advanced in spiritualism. He may have abnormal powers of vision; he may be an excellent clairvoyant, but that is no proof that he is of any worth on the spiritual plane.

By way of illustration, suppose a man has been brought up in a dark room which has certain curtains to keep out the strong sunlight; his eyes cannot bear the shock of sudden exposure to that sunlight, and he must need go through various processes of discipline before his naked eye can fully face it; but if by accident, say, a gust of wind removes the curtains and he stands suddenly in the full light of day, his eyes will become affected and lose their strength; yet he will see something, though in a

disfigured form; he will describe to others in a closed room some new phenomena which he sees; he is quite genuine in his statement, but what he says is not a true account of the phenomena which were there. It is for this reason that all knowledge in the form of messages or phenomenal observation is in the highest degree defective and unreliable, and has hardly contributed anything new to the knowledge of mankind. If some earnest spiritualists say that they see or have seen a departed soul, it is a possibility, but as they invariably clothe these spirits in earthly colours, it shows, on the most lenient interpretation, that the sight is not clear, and that an untrained eye has become blurred by being exposed to the strong rays of the sunshine — thus becoming disabled from seeing things in their real form. So their own imagination comes to their aid and makes up for deficiencies and consequently these phenomenal observations smack overmuch of the earthly plane.

There is another drawback in the way of the Western mind. For centuries it has believed in a miraculous transformation of the human mind through certain beliefs. The Lord's supper, or holy communion may have a deeper significance with advanced theology, but the belief that partaking of the Lord's supper creates Christ in man, which means conversion of baser metal into something precious, relieves the mind of the hardships which otherwise would attend its spiritual growth. A "New Thoughter" may have lost his faith in his Church theology but he has not divested himself of its legacies — "Believe in the blood and all your sins are washed away" is still lurking in his mind in his new haven; he still believes that by certain beliefs, accompanied by forms and ceremonies, he can become God incarnate.

Every man, in the Muslim belief, is a partial God incarnate. Within the four walls of humanity he is vicegerent of God on earth; he is His image. But the statue lacks animation, soul. We are statues, but statues are stone, lacking mobility, lacking life. Muslim sufis inspired by the Qur'ān have laid down a course of life which is a little hard to pursue but not impossible and quite within the reach of humanity. It is interesting to note that the same things which are the boast of the new movement in the West, on the spiritual plane, are the things which we are enjoined to shun, on the ground that they are lures and pitfalls.[11]

Inspiration and Revelation

Again we hear of inspiration and revelation in the West, which is a happy departure indeed after generations of ignorance and agnosticism. Divine inspiration is the lever of life; it changes its whole course, and brings it to the best end — a true guide in the time of utter darkness. Man is the most helpless creature on God's earth. Animals have instincts which prompt their action, and in times of danger or difficulty tell them what to do, for their allotted course is short and their aspiration limited.

Human instincts, on the other hand, if such they can be called in the guise of impulses and passions, make life a constant struggle when once they begin to rise above the ordinary animal level. Man's needs are endless and the track of his activities knows no terminus, yet he starts with some aim. There are a hundred and one ways of reaching the top of the hill, some circuitous, some zigzag, some far, some near, but there is one, and one only, which is straight; and all too frequently we find ourselves unawares on the wrong track. In every sphere of life the same principle apply: for each step of life we need guidance and light. If we believe in God, Who than He can be a better guide? We need not go to Him for our

daily sustenance; for there is enough material around us to enable us to fend for ourselves; and moreover, we have been equipped with limbs and joints for that very purpose. "Heaven helps those who help themselves" runs the saying of the West. To pray for sustenance, then, is an act of ingratitude for the Divine gifts, or at least it shows a brutishly inadequate appreciation of the blessings which, when properly used, can set us above material needs. Even those who do not pray for their daily bread get it all the same. Our only need is the knwoledge of the right way of putting Divine gifts to their best use. Hence the Muslim prayer, "Show us the right path, the path of those who are the recipients of Thy blessings" — a prayer for divine inspiration, which a Muslim says before his God, in his five daily prayers. Man has been given everything. The whole world around him is his treasure-house but he does not know how to use the treasures.

What was yesterday a mere waste in nature has today through scientific discovery been turned to a boarded wealth. A path has been opened up whereby we are enabled to gain access to inexhaustible riches, and what is true of the material plane is true also of the spiritual plane. A path is needed to the mountain-tops, a process for sublimating our animal nature into the spiritual — the sublime. And yet the lower side of our being is neither to be depreciated nor despised. It is, as it were, a hoarded material of like nature to that for which we are striving, a material which, when once the true path is found, becomes an inestimeable asset in building up the real humanity.

Just as we toil in laboratories to find out how we may utilize the metal in the bowels of the earth, so do we betake ourselves to some lonely place to commune with God and pray for the way to be revealed whereby the spiritual and moral metals in the seams of the mind may

be rendered pure and unalloyed. The Book of God vouchsafes to us the needed guidance: "those who strive hard for Us, We shall certainly guide them in Our ways," says the Qur'ān, and successive generations of Muslim sufis and divines bear testimony to the fulfilment of this promise of God.

How beautiful, how comprehensive, is the prayer: "show us the right path"! To admit, to realize our ignorance, is the only path to knowledge. This truth dawned on the mind of Socrates centuries before the Christian era. I may style it a Gospel of knowledge which the Greek prophet gave to the generation of sophists around him. To know is not to know and, with this spirit, a Muslim is on his knees before his God, when he says, "show us the right path." This is his prayer for inspiration. Jesus perhaps meant the same thing when he prayed, "give us our daily bread." "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," explains his prayer.

But his followers, unfortunately, preferred bread and butter to spiritual sustenance. They went after the kingdom of this world, which the Master renounced when tempted; and it is this temptation that foreshadowed the condition of his Church to which his followers, acting in his name, have brought it to-day. And has not the history of Christendom proved the truth of his reply to the tempter? The kingdom of this world are the object of their hankering; and so it has been from the beginning. Are they worthy of the sacred name of him who cursed the devil? Daily bread, bread in the most material, sordid sense of the word, is their prayer. No wonder the gift of inspiration, which was given to the immediate followers of Jesus, of which we read in the Acts of the Apostles and in the narratives — metaphorical though the language be — of the day of Pentecost, disappeared so soon. If the

followers of a religion become devoid of divine inspiration and degenerate into fetishism, that religion cannot keep its hold on the human mind when reason begins to get the upper hand.

Almost all the religions of the world, excepting Islam, have become victims to the demon of atheism. The best of Muslim rationalists have always fought against atheistic tendencies, and no generation of Islam has been without such people, who were blessed with divine inspiration. For such inspiration is a link between God and man, and religion cannot hold its sway if that link disappears. In a word, the sole aim and purpose of religion, in its various laws and regulations, is simply to develop that innate human but often hidden capacity which enables the mind to receive the words of God. For full seventeen hundred centuries Christendom remains barren of it.

Everything divine, which is and ought to be a common human heritage, was exclusively centred in one personage, though Jesus stood, in almost everything, on common ground with the rest of mankind. It was Church sophistry that sought to make distinction between his human and divine nature. Reason, however, arose to cast a doubt on the Church's exposition. Successive efforts at modernization kept the awakening rationality at bay, but the inevitable had to come and Christendom in the end fell a helpless prey to atheism.

The reaction has, however, taken place. The newly created movements are claiming human heritage in common with Jesus, and inspiration and revelation are claimed by man. But the reaction is not free from its characteristic drawbacks, imagination, hallucination, and various random workings of subconsciousness, which are taken for inspiration. Every human being is undoubtedly capable of it, as he is capable of very many other things.

Chance rhyming does not make a man a poet; neither does the seeing of a dream (that comes true), or an experience of a vision, prove a claim to inspiration.[12]

Mystic healing in Islam

Clairvoyance, clairaudience, the reading of each other's hearts, the transference of one's thought to another's mind, the exercise of will-power upon others, and last, but not least, the healing of illnesses without resorting to any of the various forms of treatment in vogue, are generally taken to-day as indicative of advanced spirituality. They, in themselves, are not the proof of an evolved soul; they are but the accessories of a high spirituality.

These powers have sometimes been observed in persons whose lives are not enviable, especially in the case of healing power; that is to say, the cultivation of mesmeric influence, they may enable a person to cure sickness and disease. Suggestions given under hypnotism have often proved helpful in restoring health.

The science of neurology, though of recent growth, has enabled its experts to perform the miracles of the olden days, in curing lameness, blindness, and the like infirmities, within a short time without the use of medicine. The healers have often found that diseases arising out of functional disorder of the organs and nerves are easier to cure than those arising out of organic trouble, which in some cases baffle all healing efforts. The mind exercises a stronger hold on the nervous system than on the rest of the body. A cultured will-power may work wonders in nerve troubles, and this has been observed to be true even in the case of people who are, otherwise, of ungodly life. I admit that purity of life and godly ways are a great help in attaining such abnormal powers, but these powers in themselves prove nothing. Therapeutical,

electrical and surgical treatments are all in a sense based upon the same principles, as is this so-called system of healing. This I will explain later.

The human frame is the epitome of the universe and contains everything of the world in a condensed form. The maintenance of health depends upon the maintenance of the various components of the body in their normal quantity. Deficiency in any one of these creates illness. Chlorosis (green sickness) and many other forms of anaemia may be the outcome of various pathological changes in the system, but deficiency of iron is mostly the root of all. If a physician obtains a cure by administering iron in one form or another, he is only bringing the system of his patient in tune with nature. Muslim therapeutical treatment and physiology, as well as Muslim mystic healing, started with one principle, which was lucidly formulated by the fourth Caliph, Hazrat Ali, the son-in-law of the Holy Prophet, when he said, "Man, is a microcosm. Everything is in him, and he need not go to the outer world."

Physiologists in Islam accepted this principle as the religion of truth, and based all their researches on the first part of the Caliph's aphorism. They tried to find out the various components of every human organ and used those components for the treatment of the respective organs when diseased — a method in a way analogous to the present-day system.

Neuralgia or brain substance, as physiological chemistry shows, chiefly consists of nuclein and nucleo-protieds, lecithin and various phosphates; and many brain complaints are treated by administering these in different forms. Gastric juice is supposed to be composed of hydrochloric acid, water and various salts; hence the use of saline and acid mixtures when treating stomach

troubles. Similarly, ox-gall is sometimes used to stimulate the liver in secreting bile.

The second part of the saying of Hazrat Ali became the guide of the mystic healers in Islam. "Everything is in you, and you need not go and seek for it in the outer world."

The human mind is a vast creative agency, composed of inconsistent and contrary faculties; but it knows how to put one in the background for the time being and bring the other into prominence. Weeping and laughter are antagonistic to each other, but the mind knows how to make one faculty absolutely non-existent while its contrary is at work. The average person, when weeping, cannot there and then continue to smile or laugh, but as these functions are of the components of consciousness — which is the immediate essential feature of the mind — therefore with some little effort a person can succeed in weeping and laughing at the same time; and this accomplishment, if such it can be called, exhibits itself quite naturally in the case of hysteria.

The mind has also the power to control the body. Its various phases include change of colour. Anger engenders heat, and fear, or a sudden shock, will freeze the whole system. A man's duty is to develop the creative power of his mind to such an extent that he may be able to bring into play any one organ of his body, to the exclusion of the rest.

If the human body, as Hazrat Ali says, has every thing of the universe within it, and a developed mind knows how to bring it into play, the mystic healer through the exercise of his mind, will take the medicine required to treat an illness, from the system itself.

The principles under which the vaccine injections are given will perhaps throw some light on the matter. No sooner does the human system become poisoned in some way or the other than nature begins to create "anti-bodies" to kill the germs of the poison. No antidote from without is sent into the system, everything has been procured from within ; and this method of treatment may, in the future, prove to be more efficacious than the administration of antidotes from without; for it awakens sleeping nature and puts her on the alert. She was lethargic, and the vaccine injection has shaken her up. She sets to work and collects all the material from within the system that there is everything in the system to meet every kind of illness, if we know how to utilize them at the time of need.

There are atomic ingredients of quinine in the system, but only a mind gifted with its full measure of creative power can accumulate them into a sufficient quantity for the treatment of a feverish temperature.

I have just said that the mind is capable of controlling everything in the body; but how is it to utilize that capacity? The principle by which that is achieved is the principle which underlies the mystic system of healing in Islam. The mental development essential thereto is not achieved by the mere affirmation and negation of two contrary things. It is the greatest possible sin, in my opinion, to discourage normal methods in the treatment of disease, because the working of the occult power of the mind is not an easy task.

The human mind in the body is capable of performing the same function as the God Mind in the Universe. All the atoms that compose the universe exist in the human frame. If, therefore, the God Mind creates various medicines and drugs from the world of atoms, through atomic combination and permutation, then the human mind, when its powers have become developed,

will be able to do the same. "If you know your mind, you know your God," says the Holy Prophet — which means that your mind is after the mind of God. You must imbue yourself with His attributes, and unless you reach this climax of spirituality you cannot attempt to do things by mere imagination or concentration of mind.

Wrong notions and mistaken theories are to-day playing havoc with the human intellect. Cranks and swindlers are befogging the unsuspecting mind of the average man and keeping him away from the real truth. Healing by hypnotic suggestion must have some bearing on the subject, for the human mind in its nascent state, being entangled with the various passions that arise from its physical nature, cannot freely exercise its power on that physical nature.

The hypnotist frees the mind from those shackles by causing a sort of deep slumber to fall on all the passions and impulses which have been suppressing the human mind. The mind then becomes a free agent, with all its power at its command, but it is at the same time in a passive state, amenable to all external influences. A suggestion from without works wonders; and for this very reason treatment under hypnotism is dangerous. The good or bad condition of the active agent is more than likely to affect the mind of the passive agent. This phenomenon, however, proves that the human mind, when freed from the shackles of the physical nature, can do wonders.

Now, the object of the mystic side of Islam is to elevate the human mind to that stage. We must lift up our minds and enable them to control everything in us; which thing being achieved, we can not only heal others but do practically any of the things which have been labelled "miracles". People get excited over miracles whereby dead bodies have been restored to life, the blind have received their sight and the lame have walked. Do we not

see the re-animation of dead nature at the commencement of every spring? Does not a clot of blood get ears, eyes and brain when in an embryonic condition?

The Great Mind in the Universe performs all this, but that Mind, though in the universe, is still out of the universe; seeing that it is free from the dominance of the universe. We have an image of the same Mind in this little universe of the human frame. If we free this image from the dominance of the body, our mind will do the same within the universe of our body that the Great Mind is doing in the great universe without. It is quite possible that a healer with a developed mind can secure the same result as a qualified medical man in treating an illness. So far, the contention is reasonable; but it is not every sufferer from disease that can exercise his power of mind (submerged as it is in the ocean of passions) in treating his own illness — as the Christian Scientist would suggest.

He has not the qualification of a developed mind; how then can claims of Christian Science hold good? Stray cases, here and there, are no proof, for the patient may possibly have been nearing in process of restoring him to health, though the treatment of physicians could not reach the goal; but by chance the patient comes under the influence of Christian Science and gets the health which was to come even without permitting Nature to perfect her work. Mesmeric passes, used by spiritualists in their healing circle, are only the operation of the magnetic power in us. They have nothing to do with spirituality, nor is the success of such a healer in any way an index of the advancement of his mind, though it may prove him to be possessed of concentrative power and an ability to dominate the will of others.

Herein I have explained the real philosophy of the mystic healing in Islam. Muslim divines never care much for such achievements, their main purpose being to

unshackle the human mind from the clothing of its physical nature, which is suppressing the expression of its power. The moment this grand object is attained, the power of healing and many other occult powers come to him as a sequel.

The principles of mystic healing and the method which enables man to achieve this power have been very lucidly illustrated in the following parable of the Qur'ān:

> "And your Lord revealed to the bee: Make hives in the mountains and in the trees and in what they build: Then eat of all the fruits and walk in the ways of your Lord submissively. There comes forth from their bellies a beverage of many hues, in which there is healing for men. Therein is surely a sign for a people who reflect" (16:68-69).

The mind of the bee in the whole animal kingdom has been discovered to possess a wonderful capacity for following fixed and prescribed lines. She will go miles after miles in search of food, and to suck the necessary material to create honey from within herself. But when she comes back to her hive she never swerves from the way which she pursued when going forth in her quest — not by one-thousandth part of an inch. She follows the selfsame track on her way back. It is to this that my quotation refers when it says, "and walk in the ways of your Lord submissively." A beverage with such wonderful powers as the honey used in the oriental materia medica, to treat numberless diseases, comes from within, not from without.

The quotation ends with the moral, "there is surely a sign for a people who reflect." The lesson is this: that inasmuch as everything is contained within the human frame, there is within that frame material for healing every illness. Be like the busy bee. She is inspired and

acts upon her inspiration. Man, too, stands in need of a revelation from God. The revelation is sent to show him the way, and he has to walk in the ways of his Lord submissively. Just as the bee never swerves from the ways of the Lord but pursues them with implicit submission, so must we act upon the revealed directions given to us through His messengers. If we do the same, we shall create a beverage of many properties and colours from within ourselves, or from within the patient for whom we are striving, which will bring health.

Here you have some explanation of the phenomenon. We sow seeds within our frame; do we not observe that a wrong planting of the seeds brings not even a seedling, to say nothing of fruit? If we put the seed upside down, it will branch out in the wrong way and will soon die. We have to go to the gardener to show us the way of gardening. The garden which is so much spoken of in the Bible and the Qur'ān under the name of Paradise or Heaven is the garden of our own heart. Out of the human heart will grow forth a beautiful garden, if we put into it the right seeds in the right way and irrigate them rightly. The revelation from God was sent to teach us those ways. The messengers of old time, among them Jesus, Moses, came to teach us the same lesson. The records of their teachings have become marred by time and interpolation, but the Qur'ān remains perfect as it came. Man without divine help can achieve nothing, especially in the development of his occult powers; and all the efforts which are being made in Western lands will bring forth no fruit. Men will have to come to the Qur'ān and to the Muslim divines to learn the ways. In these pages I have only outlined certain principles, the reasonable nature of the Muslim system, and its superiority over all that is now in vogue in the West, but the ways and methods which the Qur'ān lays down to work out the said principles so successfully need a big volume for their full statements.[13]

MESSAGES FROM THE SUPREME SPIRIT

Till now I have confined myself to recording dreams in which the apparition of other persons has been the instrument of bringing a message to me. Dreams of this kind may be such as to warrant the impression that the apparitions really represented the originals; but there are dreams where the dreamer himself becomes the passive medium of a message to himself. In the foregoing pages I have purposely set down those of my dreams through which various medicines were revealed to me to cure my bodily illness when the case had become apparently beyond aid. Most of these refer to one and the same complaint, which began in 1914, and I think now, after eight years, I am at last nearing recovery.

The first of the series came to me in February 1915. At that time the nature of my ailment had not rightly been ascertained. Here in England, as well as in India, medical diagnosis could not do more than discover that there was something wrong in the stomach and the liver; consequently the treatment was useless. It was sometime between I and 2 a.m. of a February night, when I was sitting on a prayer-mat, deep in meditation, that I fell into a trance; in a vision I saw a bottle full of honey and milk in my hand, with a few powders of potassium bromide. These I mixed with the contents of the bottle and took a glass from it. Soon after I resumed my normal condition, I realized that the vision was sent to me to disclose a specific medicine for my malady. But I reflected that as

bromide tends to be enervating in its effects, the suggested mixture might injure my nerves. I made mention of this very fact in my prayer, and after a few minutes I saw a "hoary-headed *darwaish*" who came to me and sat on the same prayer-mat. He told me that I was right in my apprehension, but that the mixture did contain honey and milk to act as an antidote against the ill-effects of the bromide.

It may be added that at that time I was on a journey. Two months after, I came home and consulted my doctor friends, requesting them to find out my trouble, having regard to the medicine revealed to me in my dream. This time it was easy to unravel what had remained a mystery till then, and the real complaint was discovered, simply through this revealed medicine. Could there be imagined an example of a vision better calculated than this to dispel the theories of thought-transference, spirit-visits, imagination, subconsciousness and the like? At the time of the dream I knew the properties of the bromide; but inasmuch as the complaint itself was unknown to me and I never had so much as a hint from any medical man as to its cause, how could my subconscious knowledge of the drug be responsible for the vision? Similarly if I knew that milk and honey formed an antidote to the ill-effects of the bromide, how am I to account for my uneasiness at the time? That I had to pray on this point and that the old man came in answer to my prayer to remove my apprehensions, clearly shows that the vision cannot be explained on materialistic grounds. The old man in the vision might be a spirit, but the first vision clearly shows that I myself was used as a medium by the Unseen Power for the message that came in response to my prayers which were directly to Allah. I did not invoke, and I never invoke, the help of any spirit or angel.

We, Muslim sufis, believe that God hears and that He speaks. His attributes are never in abeyance. If He used to speak to the seers and sages of the olden days, why should He remain silent to-day if a worshipper, with real and unfeigned devotion, approaches Him and lays open his heart to Him? He is all Love, and so we are told by our Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah by upon him), feels more affection for His creatures than a mother does for her children. For full eighteen months I was a miserable victim to an ailment known neither to me nor to the physicians I consulted. No case could have been more helpless than mine; and if I apporached God with humility of mind, there was no reason why I should not have been blessed with a word from Him.

In this respect, I would like to say something to those who are interested in spirit-visits and the messages received from the ghost-land. I see no reason to doubt the veracity and honesty of purpose of my spiritist friends, but I should like to see them engaged in higher pursuits. A message from the spirit-world is a possibility. It is the only means to strengthen our belief in the life after death, which appeals to a materialistic mind. Great good, no doubt, shall be forthcoming if the belief becomes popular in this matter-of-fact, materialism-ridden West. But whether it contributes to the self-edification of the individual or brings any real knowledge of the sort of which we badly stand in need, it is not for me to express an opinion. On the other hand, its abuse cannot fail to cause harm, for it is a practice which excites curiosity, encourages credulity and has opened the door to swindling in many quarters. Simple minded people are imposed upon and put to needless and fruitless occupation and anxiety.

It may be pointed out that most of the messages we have received through current spiritism are of a very

commonplace nature, and have added nothing to our treasure of knowledge. Compare it with that knowledge which has come to the world through the generation of the prophets from the Supreme Spirit. Look to those Ten Commandments revealed to Moses and, I may say, to his predecessors in the prophethood — as recent researches establish. Are they not the genesis and basic principles of the world's manifold systems of civil and moral laws? See what splendid additions have been made to the treasure of healthy knowledge by Confucius, Zoroaster, Krishna, Buddha and Jesus. Though the messages they brought from the Lord to mankind for its guidance have not reached us in the original purity, they still contain gems of rare worth, and still guide humanity to the path of righteousness. In this connection, I may refer to the message revealed to mankind in the form of the Qur'ān. All the previous messages have been collected and freed from human interpolations and systematized in a practicable form. The message not only tells us of our highest capabilities as well as our shortcomings, but also shows us ways whereby we may work out the former and guard against the latter. On the one hand we are a helpless prey to our baser passions; on the other the moral and ethical side of our nature makes us capable of soaring higher than the angels. A message is needed to free us from the tangle and put us on the path to our goal. Inaccurate and mistaken knowledge, received through divers channels has not only marred human progress but played havoc with our higher powers. We needed a plain and straight course and I think it can safely be said that the last message of God, through the Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has given it to us. The message applies itself first to the everyday trials and temptations of an average man. It deals with our animal nature. It does not suggest curtailment of our human cravings but it regulates them, and under divers courses of control turns them into morality — which being done the Qur'ān

prescribes yet another course to raise the moral order to a spiritual order.

In short, the Qur'anic message provides a code whereby we may sublimate our base passions into a lofty spirituality; and it is at this stage, we are told in the same message, that many of our occult faculties manifest themselves. Our inner senses begin to stir and we move in the worlds of angels. Leaving aside the merits and demerits of any such message from the supreme spirit, no one can deny the importance and necessity of the message I am speaking of . If we do believe in the life after death, and also believe that many of our faculties will receive their full fruition only in the life beyond the grave do we not badly need some message which may enable us to qualify to reap so great a harvest?

I have read many of the messages received through spirit mediums. Curiosity may induce wonder in many but I seldom found them, in any striking degree, edifying. I have seen a medium giving messages to scores of persons in assemblies convened for the purpose. Possibly he saw many persons there over whom a spirit was hovering. The dress and colour, and sometimes the features and age of the spirit, have been also described to us — which are often of an ordinary type and may not interest many. Then comes the message; and to my great disappointment it has told me little or nothing.

If in our general reading we are justified in making a selection of good books because life is too short to be wasted in studying trash. Would it not be wiser if we give up the pursuits of spirit-messages and spend our time in the things which are able to qualify us for holding communication with the Great Spirit? Not only would it bring to us knowledge of the most beneficial sort, but it would also induce cleanliness of life and purity of soul. What, on earth or in heaven, can we gain by attending

such seances where we have to sing vulgar street songs or listen to the commonplaces of an alleged spirit of an alleged soldier who, perhaps, died with a bottle of whisky in his pocket and this same song on his lips?

In conclusion, let me return for a moment to some of the dreams I have mentioned above. It must not be forgotten, that these dreams are the very initial and primary means of receiving messages from the Great Fountain of all knowledge and is not in any sense to be compared with that transcendental knowledge which comes to the few who, through their devotion and love for God, have received divine blessings. I may add that I once became a victim to a disease of a very complicated nature. It was the result of mental strain, but at the time medical help was of no avail, seeing that the malady could not be defined. The dream message not only gave the remedy, but furnished, besides, an efficacious clue for finding the cause of the complaint. It could have brought me the required cure, but the cause of my complaint was still in existence. The medicine did good, but again the trouble assumed a new feature, and just like a medical man who changes the prescription in accordance with the course of the ailment, so every now and then the message from the Supreme Spirit prescribed a new drug. Firstly, I am the medium of a message to myself; secondly, the message comes through a hoary-headed *darwaish*, then through the apparition of two doctor friends of mine, and, lastly, in the form of an English child. Leaving aside all other explanations, it has been a big struggle in my life for the last eight years. Mental strain and overwork have often made my case hopeless, and these messages in response to my beseeching prayers, have come to my rescue.[14]

Spiritualists

It is gratifying to note that the West has become awakened to what it is pleased to call psychic research, and is interested in the development of the latent faculties in the human frame. This alone, indeed, should be the object of our higher pursuits. The present-day civilization, which may rightly be termed the "Western civilization", consists principally in providing refined means for satisfying animal desires. Take London, for example, as one of the most characteristic centres of modern civilization. After all, it is Babylon on a higher scale. All its notions of happiness and comfort are simply such as arise from those instincts and passions which we possess in common with the animal creation; and the same may be said of the other capitals of the West. But if there be other and higher capabilities in man, the object of his life should be to work them out; and religion, if it be indeed a divine institution whereof the object is to lead us to success, can hardly be said to serve its purpose if it fails to put us on the right way to that goal. It is for us to strive to attain self-expression, and the divine revelation will guide us to it.

I need not refer to what other creeds say on the matter, but the Holy Qur'ān makes the upbringing of latent human faculties to their proper fruition the main object of divine revelation, and our order in Islam has claimed it for their sole occupation. Now I find this same spirit of a Muslim sufi working in some of the movements which have lately appeared on the Western horizon — spiritualists, "New-Thoughtists", "Christian Scientists", etc. But they are labouring under certain disadvantages which have given rise to many undesirable and, time-wasting pursuits, and the most miserable victims to it are the Christian Scientists.

We have a store of guidance in the Qur'ān and the sayings of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the writings of other sūfis. There we have got accumulated and systematized records of the experience of generations of Muslim divines and sufis. In fact, we have a course chalked out before us with its landmarks and "cautions". The way of a sufi is full of slips and pitfalls, but our mystic literature warns us against them in the clearest possible terms so as to leave no mistake about it. The sufis, with Al-Ghazzālī among them, called these pitfalls "playthings". They entice man from his right pursuit, they amuse and entertain him, but they are of no consequence. *Kashf-i sudoor* (the reading of the human heart) and *Kashf-i quboor* (the reading of the grave — the knowledge of the people in the grave) are some of these "play-things". The sufis regard them as dangerous pitfalls because they hamper progress.

We are perfectly capable of working out our inner senses, and one of these inner senses will enable us to read another's mind; but will it make our life happy? On the contrary, it brings all our happiness to bankruptcy. Consider your own mind. How often does tablet become polluted with ugly ideas and hideous schemes? What character would be given to us if our friends came to know of them? They would shun us in no time. All our social and civil relations would end in chaos if the secrets of the human heart were revealed. Similarly our reverence for the people in the past, which in some cases inspire us to follow in their footsteps, to our great advantage, would come to an end if we were enabled to read exactly how it was, and is, with the inmates of the grave. Yet, on the other hand, this "knowledge of the heart" and "the grave" is undoubtedly very alluring. It tickles our curiosity and is most fascinating; so much so, that it is apt to become the sole pursuit of our life, and thus to retard further progress. For this very reason, the Muslim sufis regard

these two acquisitions as playthings as well as pitfalls. The same thing is to be observed in all these spiritualistic circles. Indeed, they have become disgusted with the Church religion.

The spiritualists had a real and true start. Their three basic principles — universal brotherhood, belief in the life after death and accountability for present actions in the hereafter — in the last mentioned of which they dissociate themselves from the Church belief in the Atonement — are worthy of a religion from God. Their object, therefore, should be to find and work out those principles whereby these objects may be attained. How are we to create fraternal relations among the different units of humanity? How to make our life here, as well as hereafter, brilliant and successful? Thoughts of this kind should occupy our minds and time if we believe in the accountability of actions. Is not the average spiritualists of to-day occupied with the pitfall? In the family circle, or in their other meetings, they are always engaged in communications with spirits. Admitting all that has come to us on this score from the various mediums as true, it is nonetheless very commonplace knowledge and the reason is obvious. Only those spirits could appear to us who are still hovering around the earth on account of some earthly things still existing in their frames, which have prevented them from being translated to higher regions. No wonder if some of the spirits are of a very low type, and if all the knowledge which we get from them is consequently trite and trashy. It may be added here that we are told by some of the seance-holders that we should not do anything to discourage their visits to us but, on the other hand, in encouraging these visits, we damage their progress by keeping them attached to this earth, while their real progress consists in their absolute detachment from their terrestrial connections. We, on our part, gain nothing, we only hamper our own progress. These seances may help to

strengthen the belief of a novice in the world beyond the grave; but why should others who have passed that stage be interested in such matters? They should soar higher.

There are other pitfalls as well, more wonderful and therefore more fascinating than these spirit seances. But they, again, are only pitfalls, for example, the ability to see things and hear voices from a distance, sometimes hundreds of miles, to exert influence on minds of others, to produce mesmeric effect in inanimate matters, to make others see things in a form quite different from reality, etc. All these come of themselves in the way of a sufi while pursuing his course. He becomes interested in them, enjoys them for a while, but he must leave them behind. How beautifully Al-Ghazzalī has described it: "Your journey is long, full of ditches, rocks and mountains — sometimes seemingly unsurmountable for the horse you are riding on, but sometimes you find certain cool shades of orchards and lands of roses. Your horse may be allured by them — you as well — may be tempted to take rest; but the fascination becomes too strong to allow of further journeying or the horse becomes too unmanageable and obstinate to go further. You may take rest and enjoy the beauties, but you must continue your journey. They are not beautiful patches, they are really pitfalls, and the horse you are riding on is your carnal nature." I have put these ideas in my own language, and by "pitfalls" is meant everything of the kind that has been mentioned here.

Once, some eithteen years ago, I wanted to secure something of great consequence but it depended on the decision and discretion of another person in authority. In my midnight contemplation I was praying to secure this object when all of a sudden I found myself standing in the verandah of the bungalow in which the gentleman lived. It was a strange phenomenon. I was cognizant of a strange

phenonmenon. I was cognizant of the time of the environment I was sitting in — I mean my own sleeping-room with my family sleeping in the same room. I was on a mattress in a corner of the room and the time was night; on the other hand, I thought I was standing in the verandah, and the time seemed to be in the afternoon. Call it my astral body or my own self with its double form; myself in the bedroom and my double in the verandah. The vision continued for a few minutes and then passed. On the following night the same vision was repeated at the same time as before, but now my "astral body" entered the office of the bungalow where I saw the gentleman at his desk with heaps of papers before him. The third night came with the same experience at the same time, but now my papers were before him and I was pressing him to do what I wanted. Again the vision passed. The fourth night carried me again to his room and he wrote the word "sanctioned" under my orders. It has been mentioned already that throughout these visions I was simultaneously cognizant of my actual environment. Just at this moment my wife became wide-awake and called me. She had a dream to relate to me, in which she saw some person known to her telling her that the orders would be given in my favour three days later. The third day came, and at the very time in my visions when I used to find myself in his room, my servant came and informed me of the said "sanction".

The experience occurred twice to other persons as well, and they had to do as I wished, but it came without my seeking for it. The only course that I adopted on the subsequent two occasions was contemplation and prayer in the early hours of the morning without exerting myself to send my "double self" to accomplish what was required, as described above. These experiences gave me a practical proof of the exerting of influence on another's mind in the desired direction though he may be at some distance.

I admit that it is not at present within the scope of my research to explain how it occurs, but it is not difficult to achieve. But will it contribute to the welfare and happiness of the world? There are, unhappily, many more chances and possibilities for the abuse of such powers. However well-meaning we may be, we are slaves to our wishes and desires. Our judgments are very seldom immune from error, our nature lends itself to wrong as well as to right, and if in such circumstances we try to subordinate another's volition to our judgment, what an amount of harm will be done to society — even as regards those persons whose motives may be pure. But how many are there in the world whose motives are pure? On the other hand, what shall I gain by such achievements? One may amass wealth, but it never brings real happiness to man. And if there is to be a life after death, I shall be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.[15]

Latent human faculties

Electricity in the battery and electricity operating under the domination and control of the human mind are two different things. One is accumulated brute force the other a force working with design and purpose, such as we observe in telegraphy and telephone, wireless or otherwise. The human mind in the latter case, though working through telegraphy, yet stands beside it, accomplishing its design through the medium of electricity by means of the requisite appliances. It cannot subdue the electric force to its will without the use of certain plant and appliances. Suppose, however, that the human mind entered into a battery of electricity or became clothed with an electric body instead of with a physical body, man would then become unable to do all that he is doing through electric appliances. Sometimes, for example, we have to travel a distance of hundreds of miles. That is the intention of the mind. Its desire is to reach its destination with electric rapidity, but its present covering — that is to

say, its physical body — retards its purpose. It is compelled, therefore, to resort to the quickest available means of conveyance, and in these days one operated by electricity is generally selected when available.

But if man's body were of electricity then it could, in the twinkling of an eye, travel whithersoever it desired to go. Such a thing is not an impossibility. Our mental working illustrates it clearly. The minute we think of a place, it comes before our mental vision. Of course the vision brings only those things before us which we have already seen; and the whole process we ascribe in popular parlance to the power of imagination. But with an electric body such as suggested above we could reach the place personally and become cognisant of all its surroundings. Earlier I referred to a similar experience of mine in which, while sitting in my own room, I found myself in the house of another gentleman at a distance of four miles from my place. I was cognisant of both the environments, that is to say, I was fully aware of two rooms, one in my house and the other in the house of the gentleman. I was also conscious of myself standing between them both, the distance of four miles between the two being bridged over by a viaduct, as it were, of electricity.

If the ether in its first collocation gives birth to electrons — which through various complexities and complications assume the form of the human body with the mind as its ruler — then the phenomenon I have cited becomes an intelligible possibility. The human body, after all, is only a gross form of electricity. The coverings on it are too thick to allow exhibition of its electric qualities. Our power of sight and of hearing, as well as our other organs of sense, could electrically work wonders and they are quite capable of doing so inasmuch as they arose at their inception out of electronic complexities, were it not for the manifold coverings they have assumed in the

manifold stages of their journey from the nebula to the human mind. The things which we see in visions and dreams, which we experience in trance, are apt illustrations of our capabilities of this kind. While asleep or in a trance, our physical nature and its working become dormant; in other words, the electric elements in us become freed of their very hampering environments, and it is not to be wondered at if we see and hear things beyond the normal limits of sight and hearing — not surprising that sometimes our inner sight sees events which are yet to come.

We sūfis do believe that all events, if they are ultimately destined to make their appearance on the earthly plane do, in fact, make their appearance on other planes as well, before they reach that of earth. Their shape on every such other plane through which they pass in their evolutionary course partakes of the essential characteristics of the plane in which they chance to be for the time being. If in an electronic plane their shape is made up of electrons and if they be revealed to any seer in trance or vision, it is in this electronic shape that we must see them. It is for this reason that, in our dreams or visions, we see one thing and give to it the interpretation of another.

Some twenty five years ago, I saw the name of a gentleman written in stars on the sky. It was in a dream and I thought the name was conspicuous enough for everyone on earth to see it. The gentleman at the time was an unknown personage, but to-day his name is a household word throughout the Muslim world.

In those days also I was sleeping one night on the top of a house, with another gentleman beside me; it was a summer night, with the Indian starry heaven over us; and I saw in a dream that a great luminary had arisen in the middle of the sky It was more lustrous than the moon

and bigger in size as well, but one could bear to gaze on it. All of a sudden a streak of light flashed from it and went towards the west; then it shot downwards towards the earth. At the far limit of the horizon, where there was a piece of land full of thistle and thorn and all kinds of weeds, the streak began to work rapidly up and down like the needle of a sewing machine; and as it worked, the weed began to burn until a great portion of the land had become cleared of the weed. Then the streak shot back and was merged again into the luminous ball, from which it presently flashed again. This time towards the eastern horizon, where was another island patch, as it were, full of similar weeds and rank growth. The streak began to work again in the same way as it had done in the west. The scene was very fascinating and I could not help patting the gentleman beside me to share my enjoyment of the wonderful sight. In my dream I awakened him, and he also rejoiced at the sight. Then I asked him what was the time. He consulted his watch and said it was 2 a.m. The dream left me, and I was wide awake with some words on my lips which ran thus: "The gardener has come, and he shall cut all the trees which bear no fruit and burn them."

Now, I actually did awaken the gentleman and I actually did ask him the time. It was the same as he had told me in the dream. This signified to me that the rest of the dream was also a reality. I knew what it meant, but I am afraid I cannot disclose it in these pages. It referred to a great event, far-reaching in its consequences. The utmost I can say is that the event which I saw in the form of the lustrous streak flashing from the luminary in the sky, twenty-eight years ago, took nineteen years to appear on our plane, in its earliest stage. Perhaps the event was at that time in the starry land, and being there it appeared to me in that shape. Had it been on another plane, it would have assumed a shape peculiar to that other plane.

The Muslim sūfis have written voluminous books on the subject, based upon the experience of generations dealing with the interpretation of visions and dreams. To resume the subject, our physical body, with the mind in it, has been evolved out of electronic complexity. If we were able to pass through the various processes of purification and refinement, it is just as possible for the earthly components of the body to become dead, that is to say, inactive and inoperative, which being done, the electric portion in the body will become the freer in its activities with the mind as ruler of our human electrical frame, will it be surprising if we work things which appear wonders and miracles in the eyes of others?

Dead matter begins to move if we charge it with electricity but we have to procure a battery for the purpose. On the other hand, electricity is in us and if we could use it in the same way as we use the electricity in a battery, it would be no impossible thing for the touch of Moses to make a rod move like a serpent. A man lately dead may come to animation for a while and stand and move, if Jesus or a Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them), with his earthly nature sublimated into an electric nature, touches the corpse. Those who were brought to life by the prophetic touch, as we read in the sacred books of different religions, Hebrew, Muslim and Christian, received their re-animation only for a short time. It was the electricity of the body of the miracle-worker that worked the wonder. Some may assert that certain of the dead people restored to life by certain prophets lived a long life subsequently. History is silent on the subject. Moreover, the subjects of the miracles, I mean the persons who were brought to re-animation, possibly did not die though for all purposes they seem to have become dead. In such cases the seemingly dead person, when revived, could live for long after.

People in the West, nowadays, are much taken up by clairaudience, clairvoyance and the like. These are mere playthings. For some few moments the earthly elements in a person become inoperative for causes unknown to him and therefore automatically, as it seems to him, he sees or hears things under normal conditions of life. It is a proof of higher capabilities in him which he ought to cultivate. This is his heritage, and he must find out the means whereby he may raise the crop and claim the harvest. Divine economy has granted these proofs of occult powers in man at a juncture in the history of Western countries, when materialism has well-nigh killed all faith in the higher aspirations of humanity.

Similarly, belief in the life after death had become dead in this part of the world, and that meant ultimately death to morality and religion; but Providence came to our help, and enabled some of the staunchest advocates of materialistic science to see with their naked eye some of the denizens of the world beyond the grave, the main object of such revelation being to enable men to believe, in the life after death, and thus to prepare and qualify them to enter into the kingdom of heaven, which they can only do through the grave and gate of death. But alas! the experience in the case of the Western world has proved to be the experience which the Muslim sufis dread — that of the lure and the pitfall. The people here have taken up with seances and spirit visits. To some of them it became a religion, and to others a profession. Swindling and cheating came in its train. The so-called mediums began to make a living by holding seances. I know there are some genuine mediums, some of whom are personally known to me, and I believe in their experience though I may differ with their conclusions. But I wish that the so-called mediums could add a little knowledge to what we already possess as to the mystic side of human nature.

Before I go further, I would like to remove any wrong impression which my writings may leave in the mind of a Muslim sūfi, if any of them be among the number of my readers. To make the subject intelligible to the Western inquirer, I have referred to the electronic complexity of the human body and its evolution from electrons. Muslim belief, based on the Qur'ān, goes further than electronic condition in tracing not only human origin but that of the universe. It is *nūr* or light of Allah, out of which the whole universe arose. The English word "light", which we have to use in translating the Arabic word *nūr*, does not really suggest the same idea, but it comes close to it. God made us of His own "light". It became clothed with thousands of coverings when it assumed earthly form. The "light" had to pass into and through various stages before it became clothed in the human frame and made itself observable in the form of consciousness. This is our starting-point on the human plane.

We have to sublimate the animal consciousness into the cosmic consciousness which borders on the divine consciousness. If mind, allied to the human body, gives rise to animal consciousness, it will, in course of time, become evolved into the cosmic consciousness, when its physical coverings will be refined into what I may call the covering of "light". Mind, a great creative agency, with the body of light around it and with all its earthly elements dead or dormant, could ascend even to the seventh heaven if it so desired, could see things at a distance of thousands of miles in a moment of time, could hear and talk over unimaginable spaces and could do all other wonders. These phenomena I have explained on a materialistic basis, so to speak, to a certain extent. It is possible and within the bounds of human attainment. No wonder, then, if Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), in the famous night of his Ascension,

could travel through seven heavens in the twinkling of an eye, and note some of the things therein. The earthly elements in the body of the Holy Prophet which hampered the activities of the "light" body in him became inoperative for a time. The "light" resumed the rapidity of its original movement. It could travel millions of miles in the same way, as the light of the sun does in reaching the earth, the only difference between the two being that the latter does not possess mind in the evolved state in which it was in the body of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

On the next day, after the night of his ascension, the Holy Prophet's enemies, when they heard of it, came to him to test his veracity. In his ascension, he had gone first from Mecca to Jersualem, where he met the spirits of all the prophets, and then he ascended the heavens. He had never in his life been to Jerusalem and here was a chance for his enemies to test him as some of them had visited that place. Abū Sufyān, one of the Meccan chiefs and an implacable enemy of Islam, called upon him and asked him to give some description of the remains of the Temple of Solomon, asking him to count the pillars of the place... The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) says, as we read, that the Temple in its then existing condition appeared before his eyes when the question was put to him by Abū Sufyān. The rest was a matter of course. He actually saw the thing before him. and could not help being accurate in his description; his mind, with its light or electric garment around it, could go where it wanted to at once.

It has recently come within scientific ken that every organism is built up of the same material; trees, animals and men have the same elements and atoms as ingredients of their respective bodies, and yet the said three species of organisms are quite separate and distinct from each other.

Minerals also have the same component elements. These ingredients undergo a peculiar process of growth when in the vegetable kingdom. Locomotion and consciousness app-ear in them when they assume the form of flesh and the fleshy elements in different proportions; and in a more refined form they give birth to the human frame with its consciousness capable of wonderful growth.

I leave aside the other distinctive features. The ingredients in the tree are decidedly in a more refined form than in the mineral, and similarly the same when entering the animal frame become more refined still. A yet further refinement occurs in the human frame. The fact becomes clearer if we compare the brain congeries in different animals from the ape to the human. The matter is the same in the different brains but the cells increase, which indicates refinement, so much so that the brains of educated people have more cells in them than those of uneducated ones. An advanced mentality can detect slight shades of differences existing in things, while there is nothing of the sort discernible to an uncultivated mind. There has been a creation of new cells in the brain of the former and that means further refinement.

If the refinement of elements can give them growth when they are in the vegetable kingdom, and locomotion and the initial stage of consciousness when they are in the animal frame — and still further refinement create discretion, self-control and wonderful capability of growth in consciousness, is it impossible that a further refinement yet of the ingredients in the human frame may serve to enhance the power of any and every sense possessed by us? The animal mind cannot keep pace with the human mind though they both consist of the same ingredients, the difference, of course, being in the refinement. The animal mind cannot look beyond the horizon of its vision, which again is confined to a very little distance, but the human

mind, with its brain cells more and more refined, can pass into its starry lands with the same ease as we walk in the streets of London. If it is true of mentality, why should it not be true of all other latent faculties? [16]

Life after death

I have more or less explained from the materialistic point of view the mystery of certain phenomena which excite wonder in many eyes. It may be thus summed up: that which excites our wonder is only a common place event seen under different circumstances and caused by a completely different agency. For example, a serpent possesses a charm for certain kinds of birds, such as sparrows. He attracts them towards him and eats them. A cat exerts a peculiar kind of influence upon a pigeon at some definite distance, so much so the latter, with her eyes closed, becomes a willing prey to the cat if she is standing within the area of that influence. It is a common thing with these animals; but if a similar influence be exercised by one person on another person, it would be a matter of surprise and wonder. Let us assume, however, that man possesses in his body all the constituent elements that go to make up the bodies of the serpent and the cat as well as those which build the physical frame of the sparrow and the pigeon. It is obvious that consciousness is merely a product of a peculiar combination of elements and we possess in our human frame elements that will create the consciousness of the serpent or the cat. On the other hand, man possesses also within himself the elements requisite for creating the consciousness of a sparrow or a pigeon.

Our mind is, in fact, a great creative agency. Would it, then be a matter of wonder if some mind did actually by the exercise of its will cause its physical components to operate so as to create the serpent consciousness in itself, and to be capable of exercising the same influence which

a serpent exercises on a sparrow — on another person of weaker temperament by creating the sparrow consciousness in that person? This is the secret of many wonder-workers. They have learned to create within themselves a consciousness which belongs to another order of being but it entails an evil as well. By doing so, they also imbibe certain evil characteristics pertaining to that order. Just as magnet attracts iron, so also will a mind, which can manage to bring the magnetic elements in the human body into operation at a given time, draw other people to itself. Every man has within himself the elements of iron as well as those of magnet. Iron has always possessed a species of magnetic consciousness, and if a man with such consciousness lacks in tender and high feelings, it may well be on account of the iron elements in him.

Many healers as well as others who lay claim to various powers not observable in normal conditions of life, evince some very undesirable traits of character. This apparent inconsistency is attributable to the same cause. They exercise powers belonging to other creatures and imbibe the habits of these other creatures as well. For example, one who possesses the magnetic power of a serpent may well become a serpent in other ways too. The human mind is a repository of numberless faculties. Everything in the universe is contained in the human body with a mind to rule over it. The divine mind rules the universe and the goal of the human mind is to reach that stage of development wherein it will rule the little universe of human body just as the divine mind rules over the great universe. Then it will learn to walk humbly with the Lord, and its possessor will become imbued with divine attributes, — as the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) says — and will reproduce the divine morals.

The task is indeed difficult, but man has been sent into this world to perform it. When we are born we possess an animal consciousness with the power to sublimate it into cosmic consciousness, which stands only next to God. This life is the life of preparation, a land to be broken and cultivated, but harvest will come to the sickle only in the life after death with its full abundance which is to develop the divine mind from the human. Those who do so in this world begin to train themselves, though imperfectly, on the lines of the divine mind, thereby exciting the wonder of others. The drawback is the physical clothes with which the mind is covered. On death man becomes stripped of it and starts to work freely.

This also gives an insight into the nature of life after death. Decidedly it is not a physical nature that is ours then. Even here in this life, physical nature becomes dead and gone in those who partake of the divine nature, nay, I should say that no one can enter into those realms of which I am speaking unless he inflicts death on his carnal nature. Death is the passport. It may be through the working of the mind when man is alive, or it may be physical death in the ordinary course of nature.

The life after death discloses a province which brings the whole universe under the working of a soul when that soul has given birth to the divine mind. Physical nature is dead and gone the moment a man closes his eyes and leaves this world. But if the soul is still in an undeveloped condition and has not become purged of the longings which are the offspring of physical nature, it has to face hell. The lacking means to satisfy that physical nature is one of the seven hells described in the Qur'ān. Want of capacity to appreciate beauties of the life after death and inability to exercise its functions — which capacity and ability should have cultivated in this life —

is another of the Qur'anic hells. Painful treatment to cure the mind of its physical longings enable it to evolve and make further progress is another species of hell. These are some of the hells mentioned in the Qur'ān.

In short, successful entry into life after death means the birth of the divine mind at our death. When we are in an embryonic condition, we make preparation to make progress in life that is awaiting us on the earth. What we call child-birth is the name of death in the embryonic world; as we survive that death, so also we survive the death on this plane; we cannot make proper physical progress unless we enter into this world with healthy limbs and organs. The world on the other side of the grave is purely a mind world. If the mind enters into it, purged of the nature of this world and thus equipped for further evolution, he enters into the first stage of progress called the "first heaven" in the Qur'ān, and as the evolutionary stages on each plane of development are seven, so we get the seven heavens of the Qur'ān, but that is not the termination of our progress. The seventh heaven, when completed, brings man to the threshold of a further realm of progress. This is what the Qur'ān teaches.

The reader will now understand something of the nature of life after death. It consists in the possession by the human mind of the divine attributes. The Western mind, stricken by materialism, cannot think of such felicitous state, simply because it cannot be explained on materialistic lines. God be glorified, Who came to help humanity! People began to observe some of the blessings of the life after death in certain of their fellow-men though in a very insignificant degree.[17]

REFERENCES

1. *Mysticism in Islam*, Maulana Muhammad Yakub Khan, The monthly *Islamic Review*, working, Surrey, England; October 1923, pp. 348-356. Text of a lecture on August 15, in connection with the Summer School of Theology at Trinity College, Oxford. Dr. J. Estlin Carpenter, M.A., D. Litt., D.D. was in the chair.
2. *Sufism in Islam*, Maulana Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad; The monthly, *The Light*, Lahore (Pakistan). September 1989.
3. The monthly *Islamic Review*, Woking, Surrey, England; January 1922, pp. 23-36.
4. *Ibid.*, February 1922, pp. 57-60.
5. *Ibid.*, March 1922, pp. 99-104.
6. *Ibid.*, April, 1922, pp. 171-175.
7. *Ibid.*, December 1926, pp. 444-450.
8. *Ibid.*, November, 1919. Lecture at Hastings at the request of some "New Thought" friends; pp. 415-428.
9. *Ibid.*, January 1919, pp. 25-32.
10. *Ibid.*, March 1923, pp. 106-110.
11. *Ibid.*, April 1923, pp. 145-152.
12. *Ibid.*, May 1923, pp. 194-197.
13. *Ibid.*, June-July 1923, pp. 217-225.

14. *Ibid.*, May 1922, pp. 220-225.
15. *Ibid.*, June-July 1922, pp. 262-267.
16. *Ibid.*, August-September 1922, pp. 310-318.
17. *Ibid.*, November 1922, pp. 467-471.